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SAYAT^c - NOVA
An 18th-century troubadour

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND LITERARY STUDY

BY

CHARLES DOWSETT

LOVANI
IN AEDIBUS PEETERS
1997

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SAYAT'-NOVA'S PATRON, KING IRAKLI II OF GEORGIA

(Reproduced from W.E.D. Allen, *A history of the Georgian people*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner: London, 1932, *frontispiece*, from the original plate published in the *Akti Kavkazsago Arkheograficheskago Kommiseyi*). The plate shows Irakli II after the Treaty of Georgievsk, 24th January 1784, whereby Russia established suzerainty over Georgia (Allen, p. 211).

Rähmät pir ustada körpü tikänä.
Ötän tämälinä bir daş düzeir.
El içün can çäktim, ömrüm tök attım.
Nazarim qaysini qardaş düzeir.

Mercy on the old master building his bridge.
May the passer-by add a stone to its foundation.
A friend will set up a rock to mark my grave.
I worked myself to death for the sake of the nation.

Sayat^c-Nova

Amare et sapere vix deo conceditur

Lucretius

To
ANI

To Sayat'-Nova

Իփոր Դրախտում միր ՆախաՀէր
Էվային սիրով նայում էր,
Ծաղկալի ծառում զվարթ բըլբուլ
ՍիրաՀար էլ խրախանում էր:
Իփոր Էվայի Հիդ Ադամ
Սեւերես Դրախտից մեկնում էր,
Անապատում զարիբ բըլբուլ
Տըխրադէմ ցաւակըցում էր:

Իփոր աշուղ Սայաթ-Նովա
Գողալ եարին Հիդ խաղում էր,
Գուլճանում էրջանիկ բըլբուլ
Ուր Վարդին ուրախ էրգում էր:
Իփոր ամօթով սազանդար
Ապարանից աբսորվում էր,
Յուրտ տերեւաթափ պարտիզից
Խըռով բըլբուլն էլ կաղում էր:

Կովկասը վուրտիղ Ադեն էր
էսօր մե տըխրալի տիս է:
Ջէն բըլբուլին վունչ լըռեցաւ.
Միշտ Կարմիր Վարդին լալիս է.
Սայաթ-Նովուն էլ գօրեղ ձէն
Դարուց ի դարս միզ գալիս է:
Կամուրջ վուր ծեր վարպետ չինեց
Աշխարին միշտ Հույս տալիս է:

«ბუღბუღო, უდაბნოში რად იღმერი?
სხვას ეკუთვნის ვარდის ლამაზი ფერი.
შენი იმედები - კვამლი და პერი».
«ვარდის გული განძი დაფარულია.
ყველა მიჯნური არ მიღებულია.
თუმცა ჩემთვის არ აღყვავებულია,
ის მუდამ ჩემგან გაღმერთებულია!»

«სადათნოვა, შენცა ჯერ რად იღმერი?
მიჯნურო, თავზე დაგენგრევა ჭერი.
შენ ბევრს დაგცინებენ ერი და ბერი!»
«იადონი თუ დაბრმავებულია,
სიმღერა უფრო დაფასებულია.
თუმცა ჩემი სული დადაგულია,
ჩემი სიტყვაცა ყველგან ქებულია!»

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to the editors, B.L. Ch'ugaszyan and P.M. Muradyan, of the photographic facsimile of Sayat'-Nova's *Tetrak* of 1765, entitled *Khagher (Pesni)*, Erevan, 1963, the original held by the Institute of Literature in the name of Manuk Abeghyan, Erevan, Sayat'-Novayi Fond no. 1), the publication of which greatly facilitates work abroad on the poet's œuvre; and to my late friend, student and colleague Michel Daly for procuring for the Bodleian Library a microfilm of the manuscript written by the poet's youngest son Ioane at St. Petersburg in 1823 and now in the custody of the Institut Narodov Azii, St. Petersburg (MS Georg 222); and to Professor Sen Arevshatyan, Director of the State Manuscript Library (Matenadaran), Erevan, for a microfilm of the biblical manuscript copied in 1765/6 in Kakhi by Sayat'-Nova, as the married priest Step'anos. Work on the poet's life and work is indebted to the late Morus Hasrat'yan for his edition of the Armenian poems, together with translations into Tiflis Armenian verse, *Sayat'-Nova Hayeren Vratz'eren Adrbejaneren khagheri zhoghovatsu*, Erevan, 1959, 1963, the latter edition being used in this book; and to Al. Baramidze for his edition of most of the extant Georgian poems, T'bilisi, 1963. Especially helpful was my late friend Edward Gulbekyan in lending me his rich collection of recordings of Sayat'-Nova's songs as performed by Soviet artistes. The author was helped and encouraged by the moral and practical support given over more than a decade by his friend and colleague Francis Maddison, whose knowledge in particular of the medieval European troubadours and their Arab influences expanded his reading in this relevant branch of literature. The poet's work in Armenian and Georgian was regularly discussed over the same period by other regular members of his graduate seminar, including Marie Goyer, Joe Pennybacker, Michael Daly, Thomas Sinclair, Diran Rushden, Edmund Herzig, James Clackson, and others less regular. I am grateful to Professor George Hewitt for casting a critical eye over my Georgian verse offering to Sayat'-Nova.

The 250th anniversary of the poet's birth in probably 1712 was celebrated by a large number of publications in Soviet Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaidjan, some already mentioned above, in 1963. It was hoped to publish the present work in commemoration of the bicentenary of

the poet's probable martyrdom in 1795, but the fruitless delays of a university publishing house rendered this vain. It is unfortunate that Professor Sir Harold Bailey, who first introduced the author to Armenian Studies in 1949, in Sayat'-Nova terms his *pîr ustâd*, who showed a constant interest in this work, died in January 1996 prior to its publication, though he was regularly informed of its progress. I am grateful to Professor Bernard Coulie for stepping into the breach and accepting a work on mainly secular literature for inclusion in the Subsidia of the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium; the author's conscience is relieved by the fact that much of the poet's work concerns religious and ecclesiastical matters, in particular his relationship with Islâm, and there is no doubt that, while being no leading theologian, he certainly counts as an Oriental Christian writer, and was proud of it. Peeters of Louvain are to be congratulated on their high standards in again printing an English manuscript of mine bristling with typographical difficulties, with sound traditional skills growing ever more rare in the computerised age in which we now live.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	=	Arabic.
Ä	=	Äzizbäy, Kh. A., <i>Azerbayjansko-Russkii Slovar'</i> , Baku, 1985.
Arm	=	Armenian, modern, including Tiflis dialect.
Az	=	Azeri Turkish.
B	=	Baramidze, A., <i>Saiat'nova - k'art'uli lek'sebi</i> , T'bilisi, 1963.
Ch'	=	Ch'ubinashvili, Davit', <i>Gruzino-russkii slovar'</i> , Sanktpeterburg, 1887, reprinted T'bilisi, 1984.
Cl	=	Classical Armenian.
G	=	Grishashvili, I., <i>Sayat'nova</i> , T'bilisi, 1918.
Ga	=	Gaysaryan, S., (ed.) <i>Sayat-Nova, stikhotvoreniya</i> , Leningrad, 1961.
Gk	=	Greek.
H	=	Hasrat'yan, M., <i>Sayat'-Nova, hayeren, vratz'eren, adrbejaneren khagheri zhoghovatsu</i> , Erevan, 1963.
I	=	Ioane, alias Ivan Seidov, collection of his father's poem, Institut Narodov Azii MS Georg 222.
K	=	Khelashvili, Iona, <i>apud</i> Batonishvili, <i>Kalmasoba</i> , ed. K. Kekelidze and A. Baramidze, T'bilisi, 1936.
Lat	=	Latin.
M	=	Meckelein, R., <i>Georgisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch</i> , Berlin und Leipzig, 1928.
NBHL	=	<i>Nor Bargirk' Haykaz(n)ean Lezui</i> [New Dictionary of the (Classical) Armenian language], two vols., Mëkhit'arist Monastery, San Lazzaro, Venice, 1836-7.
P	=	Persian.
R	=	Redhouse, Sir J.W., <i>A Turkish and English lexicon</i> , Constantinople, 1890, reprinted Beirut, 1974.
S	=	Steingass, F., <i>A comprehensive Persian-English dictionary</i> , London, 1892, reprinted 1963.
SN	=	<i>Sayat'-Nova</i> .
T	=	(language) Western Turkish.
T	=	(source) <i>Tetrak</i> , Armenian Museum of Literature and Art, Erevan, <i>Sayat'-Novayi Fond</i> , MS no. 1.
W	=	Wardrop, Marjory Scott, (tr.) <i>The Man in the Panther Skin ... by Shot'ha Rust'aveli</i> , London, (1912), repr. 1966.

Symbols in edited texts and translations: (...) author's intent; [...] interpretative addition to text or translation; {...} otiose letter in text.

TRANSLITERATION

The alphabets of the various languages quoted in this work are transliterated as follows. Since the Georgian characters are used for poems in Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri, and Armenian characters almost exclusively for Azeri, as unified a system as possible is necessary.

Eastern Armenian				Georgian				Azeri in Cyrillic			
ա	a	շ	sh	ა	a	თ	t	А	a	Н	n
բ	b	ո	o, vo-	ბ	b	ვი	vi	Б	b	О	o
գ	g	չ	ch ^c	გ	g	უ	u	В	v	Ө	ö
դ	d	պ	p	დ	d	პ ^c	p ^c	Г	q	П	p
ե	e, ye-	յ	j	ე	e	კ ^c	k ^c	Ғ	gh	Р	r
զ	z	ն	ñ	ვ	v	ღ	gh	Д	d	С	s
է	ê	ս	s	ზ	z	ყ	q	Е	e	Т	t
բ	ě	վ	v	ყ	ey	შ	sh	Э	ä	У	u
թ	t ^c	տ	t	ო	t ^c	ჩ	ch ^c	Ж	zh	Y	ü
ժ	zh	ր	r	ი	i	ც	tz ^c	З	z	Ф	f
ի	i	ղ	tz ^c	კ	k	ძ	dz	И	i	Х	kh
լ	l	ւ	v	ლ	l	წ	ts	Ы	ï	Һ	h
խ	kh	փ	p ^c	მ	m	ჭ	ch	Ј	y	Ч	ch
ծ	ts	ք	k ^c	ნ	n	ხ	kh	К	k	Ц	j
կ	k	օ	ô	-y	-y	զ	q	К	g	Ш	sh
հ	h	ֆ	f	ო	o	ჯ	j	Л	l	,	,
ձ	dz	Կ	ya	პ	p	ჰ	h	М	m		
ղ	gh	Ի	yu-,	ჟ	zh	ფ	oy				
ճ	ch		-ü-, -iv	რ	r	ქ	f				
մ	m	ու	u	ს	s						
յ	y, h-	ույ	uy								
ն	n	ավ	av								

When representing
Armenian

օ- ê-
 (to show that there is
 no prothetic y-);
 օօ ya

The Russian alphabet is so transliterated:

a b v g d e ě zh z i ì k l m n o p r
 s t u f kh ts ch sh shch ù i ' è yu
 ya

Arabic is transliterated as by Lane, Persian and Ottoman Turkish as by Steingass, Modern Western Turkish in the reformed Roman script except that, where pertinent, Arabic and Persian loans bear the necessary pointing.

Classical Armenian is transliterated according to a Hübschmann/Meillet/Garitte system as in the *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, second series.

INTRODUCTION

The present work is based almost exclusively upon the texts of Sayat'-Nova's poems as they are recorded in his *Tetrak* of 1765, now in the Museum for Literature, Erevan, and the manuscript copied in 1823 by his younger son Ioane in St. Petersburg for the Georgian Crown Prince T'eimurazi, now MS Georg no. 222 in the library of the Institute for the Peoples of Asia, Leningrad. With all their faults — and one is lucky to have so much in writing of the work of a performing minstrel — these are the main sources. A third would be the various manuscript collections of Armenian and Georgian songs and literary journals in the Soviet Union, but these have not been available to the present writer. Constant reference has been made to the edition of the late Morus Hasrat'yan, a veritable *tour de force* in which, apart from on the whole reliable texts of the Armenian poems, those originally in Georgian and Azeri Turkish have been remodelled into metrical and rhyming versions in the poet's Tiflis Armenian dialect, though the present work relies only upon the Georgian and Azeri originals. For the Georgian poems, Baramidze's edition of 1963 has been consulted; for the Azeri, that (marred by many unnecessary emendations) of Arasli. Two centuries after the poet's death, despite all the protestations of undying veneration, there is as yet no critical edition of the Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri poems, the last being in particular need of scholarly attention. Nevertheless, something can be done with the available texts, although one Englishman can hardly expect to swim, like the poet himself, equally well in Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri Turkish waters.

With regard to the transliteration of these languages, a unified system has been adopted, as it had already been by Sayat'-Nova and his scribes: Ioane's manuscript is entirely in the Georgian script, and in the *Tetrak* all the Armenian poems, with the exception of the Armenian hemistichs in the Armenian-Azeri macaronic poem *Mazir unis dastarehan* 'You have hair like a bouquet of basil' (p. 7), are written in the Georgian character, the Armenian script being used, along with Georgian, for the Azeri poems. Sayat'-Nova, in composing the *Tetrak* of which he is most probably the sole scribe (the handwriting varying only superficially according to mood), and his son Ioane, must have

felt that the Georgian script was apter for the poet's mainly Tiflis Armenian, which differed greatly from Classical Armenian and the Constantinople and modified Erevan Armenian which would, a century after his poetic activity, develop into Standard Western and Eastern Armenian. The system of transliteration here adopted is as far as possible in accordance with English orthography, for it is important in dealing with the work of a poet for whom euphony is of the essence that readers should have the clearest idea possible of the sound of the verse. As far as possible, the same system has been used for all the languages: a Georgian *p*, being ejective, though well representing the similarly ejective *p* of Tiflis Armenian, is obviously not the same as an Azeri *p*, but Sayat'-Nova and his son Ioane were content to use it in writing the text of all three languages, and there is no reason not to follow suit. Il ne faut pas être plus royaliste que le roi, and this is not a work of comparative phonology. The philological principle of rendering one foreign sign by one Roman sign (though one notes that the International Phonetic Alphabet deviates from this, using symbols like [tʃ] for *č*) has been abandoned. Armenian transliterated thus, in the Hübschmann tradition, essential for etymological investigations, etc., looks to the general reader, whose main interest may be poetry and who does not deserve to be subjected to such strain, like a series of algebraic equations. He cannot be expected to remember that *j* represents *dz*. In this work it represents *ǰ*, as in *jerm* 'warm' (Hübschmann *ǰerm*), also in Islamic languages (*jân* 'soul, life', for the French style, adopted by the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *djân*). The unvoiced guttural scrape *χ* (as in Scots English *loch*) is rendered as *kh*, not as a confusing *x*. The voiced equivalent, which the ancient 'dark' *l* (Hübschmann *l̥*) had become long before Sayat'-Nova's time, so that there is no sense at all in rendering it with philological purity or obstinacy as a lateral, is rendered *gh* (Arm. *agh* 'salt', Georg. *ghone* 'strength', Azeri *yagh* 'butter'.) Aspirated unvoiced plosives are rendered, as in the Hübschmann system, by an inverted apostrophe (Arm. *k'aj* 'brave, tutelary genius', Georg. *k'aj-i* 'demon'); since Azeri and Persian unvoiced plosives are written in Sayat'-Nova's Armenian and Georgian script as aspirates, which is indeed the phonetic reality, they are so transliterated here (e.g. Azeri *k'ar* 'deaf'), though when a Turkish, Azeri, or Persian word is otherwise quoted, e.g. from a dictionary, the usual transliteration obtains (e.g. Azeri *kar* 'deaf'). No attempt is made to normalise Azeri words in the texts with respect to vocalic harmony,

usually ignored by the poet, or the dialect.¹ *ch* represents the lingual soft-palatal affricate (Hübschmann's *č*), as in Arm. *chashak* 'taste; vessel', Georg. *chashak-i* 'vessel'), its aspirate equivalent being rendered *ch'*, as in Arm. *ch'ap'* 'measure', Georg. *ch'ap'-i* 'water-jug, liquid-measure', cf. Tk. lwd. *çap* 'calibre'). The lingual-hard-palatal affricate is rendered by *ts*, as in Arm. *tsês* 'rite', Georg. *tses-i* 'rite', and its aspirate equivalent by *tz'* (an innocuous differentiation to help underline the distinction) as in Arm. *tz'akh* 'brushwood', Georg. *tz'akh-i* 'brushwood used as a frame in silk production' (in which the Armenians were pre-eminent).² The unvoiced 'hush' sibilant is rendered *sh* (Arm. *shên* 'inhabited place', Georg. *shen-i* 'edifice', Azeri *shen-lik* 'inhabited place'), its voiced equivalent *zh*, as in Arm. *zhang* 'rust, oxide', Georg. *zhang-i* 'id.', Azeri *zhäng* 'Venetian green, arseno-acetate of copper', from Iranian (Persian *zhang* 'rust, verdigris, etc.'). The Georgian ejective/glottalised plosives and affricates are left unmarked, as being the speakers' normal equivalents of, say, Indo-European unvoiced plosives and affricates, the aspirate equivalents only being marked (thus, Georg. *kari* 'door', *k'ari* 'wind'); in Sayat'-Nova's Georgian Armenian dialect the non-aspirate plosives and affricates are likewise ejective, and likewise left unmarked — though those who might aim to recite his poems should remember their phonetic quality.

Armenian rolled alveolar *n r* (Italian *r*) is not distinguished from the alveolar fricative *p r* (English *r*) in the Georgian script, and it may be that Sayat'-Nova, who ignored the difference in rhymes (rhyming *-ar'* with *-ar*), like other Armenians, pronounced them alike; but the former is reestablished below in Armenian words as *r*, as by Hübschmann.

The Armenian palatal semi-vowel has been rendered as *y* also when it occurs in the graphe *ea* representing the rising diphthong *ya* (only in the Azeri poems, e.g. *ear* pronounced, and here written, *yar* 'beloved': the graphe does not occur in the few Armenian hemistichs written in the

¹ Sayat'-Nova's transcription of Azeri does not accord with the more exact Armeno-Turkish systems, notably that of Mëkhit'ar Sebastatz'i of 1727, described by F. von Kraelitz-Greifenhorst, 'Studien zum Armenisch-Türkischen', *Sitzungsberichte d. K. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Kl.*, Bd. 168, 1912. Like the Arabic/Persian/Turkish script of his time, inferior to Mëkhit'ar's in e.g. using one symbol for *u*, *ü*, *o*, *ö*, *v*, SN does not distinguish between *u* and *ü*, *o* and *ö*, though *v* is clearly rendered. On Azeri deviations from vocalic harmony, see M. Sh. Shiraliev, *Dialekti i govori*, Baku, 1983, pp. 25-28. SN's Azeri has in any case dialectal features (see below, pp. 190, 192, 337, 427), though what 'standard' Azeri was in his day seems a fair question.

² These examples do not necessarily occur in SN's texts.

Armenian character); in Georgian script the sound is represented by *i*, which has been usually retained (e.g. *Saiat'nova*). The Armenian sign for the ancient Armenian bilabial *w* (*ւ*) is pronounced when not part of the graphai *ow* (= *u*) and non-final *iw* (= *yu*, in Azeri *ü*) as the labial-dental fricative *v*, so written in the Georgian script, and here (it occurs only once in an Armenian word in Armenian script, *hawasar* pronounced *havasar* 'equal', among the above-mentioned hemistichs).

The Armenian ex-diphthongal *ł* (Hübschmann *ē*) is rendered *ê*, in line with Persian and Arabic long vowels (*â, î, û*). Most writing nowadays is done on a keyboard, and these cannot normally produce macra without tedious manipulation. Nor do they normally provide the upside down *ə* with which philologists, plaguing generations of printers, have presumed to render the equivalent of the French *e`muet*. This is here rendered *ě*. The Georgian script has no sign for this vowel, and in the Armenian script, even when pronounced, it is not normally written. Metrically, however, it can count as a syllable, and is then better written, as in fact it is in the *Tetrak* in the above-mentioned Armenian hemistichs (e.g. *něman*, which Hasrat'yan, p. 78, has reduced to *nman*, as normally written, but not so pronounced). When it has a metrical value, it is written in this present work.

The above explanation is complicated, but that is the nature of transliteration. The present writer would have found it easier to adhere, as in previous works dealing with earlier periods of Armenian, to the Hübschmann system. He feels fully justified in deviating from it now, being convinced that of the two versions of a verse of Sayat'-Nova that follow, Armenians and the general reader will find the former more pronounceable:

- (1) *Êsôr im yarin tesa baghch'i meč'ěn man galov*
- (2) *Êsôr im earin tesay bałč'i meč'ən man galov*³

³ *Tetrak*, fol. 110, in Georgian script; Hasrat'yan, (Arm.) no. 14, p. 26.

CHAPTER ONE

THE POET'S LIFE: THE FACTS

The whole world knows of that poet, born in the provinces to the tradesman's class, celebrated in the capital as player to the Royal Court, who, like 'a saucy bark' on the broad main of his Dark Lady's love, 'went here and there', made himself 'a motley to the view', 'stamp'd vulgar scandal upon (his) brow', and fell into disgrace with 'Fortune and men's eyes'¹. Two centuries later another poet came, from another, far distant, province, to another, less glorious court, who to all of that could say 'Amen'. Both could treat lightly of the lover and his lass, praise his mistress's eyebrow, or her beauty spot, in songs more melodious sometimes than sincere,

*With adoration, with fertile tears,
With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire.*

Both knew the powers of poesy, and its limitations:

'I forgive you the praise.'
'Alas, I took great pains to study it, and 'tis poetical.'
'It is the more like to be feigned.'²

But love is a dangerous game to play, and like Goethe's young man, who heedless of any warning plucks the rose from her native heath, each found the thorn that draws real blood, and leaves a wound that may never heal:

*Half ihm doch kein Weh und Ach,
Musst' es ewig leiden.*³

The Caucasian troubadour who is the subject of this book, who sang many songs to the Rose, was to learn the Nightingale's lesson well. Whether it was Love alone that occasioned his downfall will be investigated. That an Armenian minstrel at a Georgian court may be helped on his way out by jealous native courtiers would have been appreciated by

¹ *Sonnets*, nos. 80, 127, 110, 112, 29.

² *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.

³ *Heidenröslein*.

a fellow poet born two years after his death, namely Henrich Heine, who suffered obloquy as a 'Dichterjude'. Paralysed and on his death-bed, Heine was to wonder why he, 'Gottes Narr', had been struck down by an unappreciative Almighty. Sayat'-Nova, who seems also to have called himself 'God's jester',⁴ though not slow to criticise his amousos enemies, was too orthodox a Christian to breathe any word of dissatisfaction with a Creator who, as any observer of the universe may observe, has, like Homer's Zeus, a few tricks of his own. Sayat'-Nova, forced into holy orders against his will, took his punishment like a man, attributing the blame solely to himself: 'Whom may I blame? From what did it all come? These things come from my own cleverness.'⁵ And when the time came ...

But we have anticipated too much already.

Who was Sayat'-Nova?

Or better, who *is* Sayat'-Nova?

For he is certainly one of those of whom the French chanson sings

*Longtemps, longtemps, longtemps après
Que les poètes ont disparu,
Leurs chansons courent encore
Dans la rue.*⁶

At least in the streets of Tiflis, Erevan, and Baku.

The Armenian scholar Nikol Aghbalyan, who was born and brought up in Havlabar, the mixed quarter of Tiflis whence the poet's mother originated, has given a vivid account of his first encounter with the songs of his compatriot, which in his day, end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century, were sung at the festive gatherings which took place in the Georgian capital in the evenings after work as regularly 'as though by a law of nature'. 'One day, returning home from school, I saw a group of men seated in a restaurant at a table laden with wine and shashlik; they had persuaded a greybeard to sing a song, and what he sang was Sayat'-Nova's *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is* 'Thou art profoundly

⁴ *Khumari var, ghvt'inari*, the reading and meaning of which is not clear; see below, Chapter Five, p. 142, n. 29.

⁵ The refrain of *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head'; see below, Chapter Four, p. 121.

⁶ Charles Trenet, *L'âme des poètes*, Editions Raoul Breton: Paris, 1951. It should not be thought incongruous to quote a modern French singer-composer in this context: Sayat'-Nova may be of a higher degree, but chansonniers like Trenet, Léo Ferré, Wolf Biermann, etc., are of the same order.

wise'. I learned the tune there and then, and after the performance, I went home humming it. That tune, it later transpired, only I knew, since there was no other singer of Sayat^c-Nova's songs left.' This tune he taught to the eminent Armenian poet Hovhannes T^cumanyan, and passed on to the composer Spendaryan who adapted it for the overture to his opera *Enzeli*.⁷ In spite of the pivotal influence he, probably justifiably, claims, it is to be doubted that he was the only one in Tiflis able to sing Sayat^c-Nova's songs. He records that his mother, who sang in a local choir, presented him with an edition of the minstrel's Armenian songs, probably, as Henrik Bakhch^cinyan surmises, that published in 1882 by the Tiflis Armenian literary society, the very fact of which shows that the poet was far from forgotten. And it is a fact, easily checked, that to this day, it would be difficult to find an Armenian who did not know a song by Sayat^c-Nova. At Oxford, in the 1970's, the present writer entertained a visiting Armenian professor of chemistry who, hearing of his interest in Sayat^c-Nova, immediately broke into one of his songs, singing it in the traditional fashion, with all the necessary accidentals and quarter-tones often neglected by Soviet-trained professional singers.

In Europe, one associates the art of the troubadour with the Middle Ages. In the East, in Turkey, Persia, Arabia, Armenia, Georgia, this art still flourishes. Much of it is doubtless not of a high literary order. There is no doubt, however, that Sayat^c-Nova was a poet of the first water, even if, as he says in a famous verse, his water is not everyone's water. He obeys the literary conventions of his day, mainly derived from Persia. In poem after poem the Nightingale will sing his unrequited love for the Rose, the Moth will perish in the irresistible flame of the Candle, Majnûn will starve to death in the wilderness for love of Leila. Some *plaintes* are merely what is expected of the '*âshiq*', the doomed lover. But through all these clouds of convention, the authentic voice of the lyric poet is clearly audible. His major songs are not happy ones. But enough of his life is known for us to know that their complaints derive from genuine suffering, often faced with defiance. It is this sincerity of feeling, which finds an echo in the often justifiable melancholy of mankind in general and his compatriots in particular, that ensure his lasting fame. *Me khosk unim* 'I have a word to say', he says. So have we all, and he says it for us.

⁷ Related by Henrik Bakhch^cinyan, *Sayat^c-Nova ew Sp^ciwrk^cê* [SN and the Armenian Diaspora], *Haykazyan Hayagitakan Handês*, vol. II, Beirut, 1991, pp. 227-9.

Sayat'-Nova composed and sang his songs in three main languages, Armenian, Georgian, and the Turkish of Azerbaidjan, accompanying himself on three instruments, the *k'amanch'a* or spiked fiddle, the *ch'onguri* or Georgian lute, and the *t'ambur*, most likely the Caucasian *t'ar*, in Georgia, between ca. 1730 and 1759.

18th-century Georgia was far different from England of the same epoch. There was no Dr. Johnson to write the Lives of the Caucasian poets. Sayat'-Nova was minstrel to the royal courts of T'elavi and Tiflis when Irakli II reigned as king of Kakhet'i and then of all Georgia. No account of his life at court exists, but although there was no correspondence between the poet and his royal sponsor, such as that between Voltaire and Frederick the Great, we do possess some evidence of their relationship in the form of Sayat'-Nova's poetical complaints and apologies to the King. Although he was dismissed from the Court in 1759 for reasons unknown (but not for want of conjecture, for one must remember Friedrich Kopp's remark with respect to the exact location of Varus's defeat, 'soviel wird nur über Dinge geschrieben, die man *nicht* wissen kann'), he was not unappreciated: sixty odd years after this dismissal, and a quarter of a century after the poet's death, it was the Crown Prince T'eimurazi, heir to the now defunct Georgian throne, in St. Petersburg, who, surely partly out of a genuine interest in literature and partly out of nostalgia for the glory of his royal ancestors prior to Russian aid and annexation, commissioned Sayat'-Nova's younger son Ioane to write down what he remembered of his father's poetic work. This Ioane, who in Russia used the name Ivan Seidov, completed on 23rd March 1823 O.S. It contains many annotations of relevance to the poet's biography. Further information is provided in a manuscript in various Armenian and Georgian hands comprising many of Sayat'-Nova's Armenian and Azeri (though no completely Georgian) poems, the so-called *Tetrak*, completed by 1765: this contains some remarks in Armenian concerning the poet's development as a minstrel, almost surely by his own hand. The six Russian songs recorded in Cyrillic in Ioane's manuscript are of no literary value whatsoever, but by the very fact of their existence, provided they are genuinely by Sayat'-Nova and not exercises in his father's style by Ioane, they are of some biographical significance. But all in all, as in the case of that other great unknown of world literature, William Shakespeare, it is predominantly from the works themselves that one gains insight into the minstrel's life which, in his own terms, was one of *elamut*, 'ups and downs'.

We know very little that is based on solid written evidence or logical deduction of the life of Sayat'-Nova. Serious autobiographical information — one will deal with his imaginative 'autobiographical' Azeri poem later — is very scarce. In colophons to the manuscript of the books ascribed to Solomon and the Act of the Apostles in Armenian which he copied at Kakhi in A.D. 1765/6 after he had ceased to be a minstrel and had taken holy orders as a married priest (*k'ahanay*) he names his father as the *mahtesi* (pilgrim to Jerusalem) Karapet, and his mother as Sarra/Sara.⁸ In the final stanza of his Azeri poem *Bir yar bir musayib* 'One beloved is a companion (*müsaḥib*)' he says

*Birisin diar sayiat'nôva naradan,
Birisin hêd diar birin hamadan.*

*Vat'anum t'ipl(i)z dur samt'i gurjistan.
Anam hawlabarlo(w) at'am halaplu.*⁹

The poem is written in Armenian script but, as with most of Sayat'-Nova's poems, it is not without obscurities. *naradan*, if it is the name of a place, is not wellknown (there would be serious phonetic difficulties in identifying it with Turkish Narda (i.e. Arta). Perhaps it is meant as the ablative of APT *nâr* 'fire, hell', as in *ahl-i nâr* 'the damned'; or as P *nârdân* 'juice or grains of the pomegranate (PT *nâr*)', used figuratively as 'tears of blood' (P *nârdân afshândan* 'shed tears of blood', Steingass), which flow not uncommonly in Sayat'-Nova's verse.¹⁰ *hêd* probably stands for *Hênd*, i.e. Hind, written elsewhere, in Georgian script, as *hnd*.¹¹ *samt'i* possibly stands for Georgian *samt'o* 'mountain-' (adj.). *hawlabar* is the Havlabar quarter of Tiflis with its mixed Georgian and Armenian population. Thus the stanza probably means

One says Sayat'-Nova is from 'Naradan'.
One says India, another Hamadan.
My homeland is Tiflis, Georgia Oreias.
My mother is of Havlabar, my father of Aleppo.

⁸ Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, foll. 100v, 276v, reproduced in the Appendix to the facsimile of the *Tetrak*, pp. 142-3.

⁹ *Tetrak*, p. 60.

¹⁰ E.G. *Sayat'-Noven asatz', zalum, ach'kës lalis e arin* 'Sayat'-Nova said, Cruel one, my eye weeps blood', in *Dastamazët sim u sharbab*, st. 5, l.1, *Tetrak*, p. 117, Hasrat'yan, Armenian no. 22, p. 34. It is this image that clearly inspired the title of Sergo Parajanov's 1969 colour film concerning the life of Sayat'-Nova, *Nran guynë* 'The Colour of Pomegranates'.

¹¹ Ioane (Leningrad, Institut Narodov Azii, MS Georg 222), fol. 64r, final verse; written in full, also in Georgian script, as *Hind-*, in the *Tetrak*, p. 106, line 15.

On what ground Baramidze says that the poet's father was a church servant (*eklesiis msakhuri*), specifically a verger (*'mnat'e'*) is unknown, but that he was not of noble origin (*ugvaro*)¹² is very probable. That he had settled in Sanahin, in Georgia on the Armenian border, we have from his sponsor Irakli II's grandson, the Crown Prince T'eimurazi, who says the poet was a *Sanaeli*.¹³ Hasrat'yan is probably right to assume that he fled Syria as a result of economic and ethno-religious oppression.¹⁴ He is also right to deduce that Karapet passed through Tiflis,¹⁵ since his wife Sara came from there. His son claims Tiflis to be his *vätän* or motherland, but this must be meant in a cultural sense, not that he was born or spent his childhood there, as some, with no documentary evidence, have assumed,¹⁶ since otherwise he would not have counted as a *Sanaeli*, nor could he have claimed, from a Tiflis suburb, to have been the son of the soil he says he is — apart from the fact that the wife normally follows her husband. Sanahin, therefore, would seem to be the poet's birthplace.

Being of lowly origin — *me glekhi var, t'avadoba ar minda* 'I am a peasant, I have no wish to be a prince',¹⁷ the poet possibly had no surname, though his son Ioane signed himself in the Russian fashion, though in Georgian script, as *Ivan Seidov*,¹⁸ and compatriots have attributed to him the family name of Sayadyan, which will be touched upon below in examining his *nom de plume* Sayat'-Nova, itself problematic. His baptismal name was *Arut'in*, a form of *Harut'yun* (Classical *Yarut'iwn*), 'Anastasius'. He combines the two names in a Georgian poem:

*Saiat'nova mk'vian, arut'ina var*¹⁹

'They call me Sayat'-Nova, I am Arut'in'

On becoming a priest, after 1759, he received, doubtless from his bishop, the religious name *Step'anos*, with which he signs himself in Armenian as the scribe of the above-mentioned manuscript of 1765/6.

¹² Baramidze, p. 93.

¹³ *T'eimurazi Batonishvilis tsignt'satz'vis katalogi*, ed. S. Iordanishvili, Georgian Academy of Sciences: T'bilisi, 1948, no. 179, p. 40.

¹⁴ Hasrat'yan, p. vii.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. viii.

¹⁶ E.g. H. Bakhch'inyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-6, who relates of the scholar N. Aghbalyan that 'he was born and received his primary education in Havlabar, the Armenian quarter of Tiflis, in the very place where Sayat'-Nova was born and lived.'

¹⁷ *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, st. 1, v. 5, Ioane, fol. 9, Baramidze, p. 21.

¹⁸ Ioane, fol. 20.

¹⁹ Baramidze, p. 30. Also in *Damijere*, Baramidze, p. 10: *saiat'novas arut'inas itqvian* 'They call me Sayat'-Nova, Arut'in.'

Whether he spent his childhood in Tiflis or Sanahin, the poet must have received an education supervised by the Armenian Church. The monastery of Sanahin comprised a *chemaran* or school situated in a long vaulted hall named after the 11th-century prince and scholar Grigor Magistros, who composed an epistle in praise of the piety and learning of the monks. Although there appears to be a gap in the succession of abbots between 1689 and 1724, i.e. precisely during the period of Sayat'-Nova's childhood,²⁰ there is no reason why the school should not have continued to function. At any rate, Sayat'-Nova learned his letters, both Georgian and Armenian, and he is quick to refute any possible suggestion of the illiteracy one might have directed at other ashughs:

Anabana vitz'i, sitqvīt' tsina var

'I know my ABC: I am not-backward when it comes to words.'²¹

Like his own sons Melk'o and Ioane, who, apart from the latter's clumsy Cyrillic in his 1823 manuscript, wrote exclusively in the Georgian alphabet, Sayat'-Nova's most fluent script was Georgian, though he eventually became the script of three Armenian manuscripts. It is possible that much of the teaching at Sanahin was in Georgian, but in any case, his mother, being from Tiflis, was probably more at home with Georgian than with Armenian. A hundred years later, the Tiflis Armenian playwright Sundukyantz' corresponded with his mother exclusively in Georgian.²² Sayat'-Nova's 'mother tongue' could likewise literally have been Georgian. But he was a proud member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and Classical Armenian was its official language. As

²⁰ A photograph of the *chemaran* and plans of Sanahin and Haghpāt are found in Morus S. Hasrathian, V. Harouthiounian and V. Tutundjian, *Monuments d'Arménie*, Association Culturelle V. Tekeyan: Beirut, 1975, pp. 137, 134. The Armenian text of Grigor Magistros's *Reply to the letter of the holy brothers of the monastery of Sanahin*, typically verbose but vividly characterising the monks' mortification of the flesh, vegetarianism, etc., is edited by K. Kostaneanc', *Grigor Magistrosi T'h'er*, Alexandropol, 1919, no. 61, pp. 136-142; an abbreviated version is in L. Inčičean, *Storagrut'iwn hin Hayastaneayc'*, Venice, 1822, pp. 348-9. This is the only connection of Grigor Magistros, apart from giving his name to the library and school, with Sanahin, the statement by Sargis Jalaleanc' that the Grigor Vahrameanc' buried at the Church of the Mother of God at Sanahin was the writer's grandfather being incorrect, as M.-F. Brosset points out (*Opisanie monastyreĭ Akhpatskago i Sanaginskago arkhimandrita Ioanna Krymskago, Description des monastères arméniens d'Haghat et de Sanahin par l'archimandrite Jean de Crimée*, Mém. de l'Acad. Imp. des Sc. de St. Pétersbourg, VIIe série, t. VI, no. 6, Appendice, p. 79 n. 3; *ibid.*, p. 93, for the list of abbots, showing a gap between the death of Barsegh in 1689 and the accession of Grigor in 1724).

²¹ Ed. Baramidze, p. 94.

²² G. Sundukyantz', *Erkeri zhoghovatsu* [Collected works], t. VI, *passim*.

far as Armenian culture is concerned, how much he owed to his own wit, and how much to the monks of Sanahin is what is called a moot point. His knowledge of Classical Armenian is very defective, as may be seen from the colophons he composed, hopefully in that traditional form of the language, in his Armenian colophons.²³ One cannot, of course, assume that there was a member of the Sanahin community qualified to teach Classical Armenian as efficiently as contemporary English cathedral schools taught its European equivalent, Latin. Moreover, the grammar of his Armenian, Georgian and Azeri poems often cause an eyebrow to rise, and that of his six Russian poems — though that is perhaps more understandable, since he was unlikely to have received any formal tuition in that language, a smattering of which he probably picked up from Russian merchants in Tiflis — is not impressive. It does not matter much. It all depends, as Humpty-Dumpty says, when it comes to language, who is the master. Sayat'-Nova forged his own literary languages, mixing Western and Eastern forms in Armenian, larding his Georgian poems with Turkish and Persian words. He was not, in any case, trained to be a scholar. At the age of twelve, as he writes in his 'autobiographical' Azeri poem reproduced below in Chapter Two, he was apprenticed to a master craftsman, passing out (as a journeyman, in the terminology of medieval guilds), at the age of fourteen, and presenting his master with a *khalat* or robe of honour.²⁴ To a greater or lesser extent, all autobiographies have an element of fiction. In this genre also πολλά ψεύδονται ἄοιδοί. Goethe's autobiography is aptly named *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, which one might, with no intention of detracting from his renown, amend to *Dichtung oder Wahrheit*. Sayat'-Nova's autobiographical poem is clearly rich in imagination, but there must be elements of truth in it; one that begins with an address to the Deity would border on blasphemy were it wholly false. Whatever craft he learned, it was not in the first instance, though he may in his leisure hours or subsequently received musical tuition from a *pîr* or master, have been that of musician, for no instrumentalist, with the exception of such as Mozart, could dub himself fully accomplished at the age of fourteen, and in any case he specified elsewhere that he mastered his three instruments by the age of thirty.²⁵ It is a common tradition in Armenia that Sayat'-Nova was by trade a weaver (probably by virtue of

²³ See below, p. 10 n. 33.

²⁴ St. 5, v. 4 - st. 6, v. 2; see below, p. 10, Chapter Two, p. 59.

²⁵ See below, p. 13.

the mention of the *khalat*) or a dyer (by virtue of the mastery of 'white and black' at the age of 15 (or 16) claimed in the poem).²⁶ The tradition is vividly illustrated in Sergo Parajanov's remarkable film *Nġan guynġ* 'The colour of pomegranates' of 1969. In support of this tradition much has been made of the abundant mention of cloths of all kinds. 'You are brocade and *yenidũnya* ("New World" cloth), gold weave and gold' in an Armenian poem. Satin, moiré, fine cotton cloth, and brocade are mentioned as adorning the beloved in two successive lines in a Georgian poem. In an Azeri poem an upstart's wealth is expressed in terms of a closet full of *qumāsh*, 'silk' or 'fine linen'.²⁷ In a Georgian epithalamium he singles out the mats and rugs laid down for the guests, and the fine woollen shawl wrapped round the bride, and declares, albeit satirically with reference to the rich attire of the same guests, that all is right with the world as long as there are drapers (*bazzāz*).²⁸ 'Why do you wear bright colours and gold brocade?', a question to another Georgian beauty,²⁹ might point both to a weaver and a dyer. But his predecessor as the principal Tiflis Armenian bard, Naghash Hovnat'an, whose soubriquet shows that he was an artist, also mentions a variety of textiles in his eulogy of the ladies of the Georgian metropolis.³⁰ From Sayat'-Nova's equally frequent mention of gold, diamonds, rubies, pearls, crystal, hair-styles even, one might reach other valid conclusions. There is clearly a danger in such a line of investigation equivalent to deducing from his very artificial description of Heaven that Milton was not a Latin secretary, but an interior decorator or jeweller. Viewed from the opposite pole, *via negativa*, though Shakespeare may have had something to do in his youth with his father's trade as a glover, there is little talk of gloves in his work, though there are at least two mentions to spur the

²⁶ St. 6 v. 3 (as now extant); see above n. 13. V. Inglisian interprets the text as showing the poet to have been a carpenter (Tischler) which, although erroneous, illustrates the uncertainty surrounding his former trade ('Die armenische Literatur', *Armenisch und Kaukasische Sprachen*, Handbuch der Orientalistik, I.7, Brill: Leiden, 1963, p. 231).

²⁷ *Diba u engidunia, zarbab u zar is, govelli*, Tetrak, p. 106, Hasrat'yan, Arm. no. 7, p. 17: *atlashia, kharashia, khasashia...*, ... *dibis boghch'ashi...*, in *Ra ik'neba damid-zakho* 'How will it be if you call me', st. 4, vv. 4-5, Baramidze, p. 46; *har k'im k'ohna shala hasrat' qalub dur, indi hujrasina qumash duzeir* 'he who would (formerly) regret the loss of an old shawl, now lays down fine-linen in his closet', *Tetrak*, p. 43, Ioane, fol. 31A, Hasrat'yan, p. 179, Gaysaryan, p. 209.

²⁸ In *Baghi bulbulit' avsila*, see below, Chapter 3, pp. 88, 92.

²⁹ *Rasatz' p'ers zarbabs ch'aitez'vam*, in *Me shent' ana siqvaruli mak'vs* 'With you I know love', st. 4 v. 2, Ioane fol. 8r, Baramidze, p. 62.

³⁰ See below, Chapter Three, p. 77.

ardent researcher. It is clearly hasardous to entitle Sayat'-Nova on the basis of his mention of many textiles, as his first editor Akhverdyan has done, a *julhak* or 'weaver', and his statement that he presented his master with a *khalat*' cannot be used in evidence. APT *khil'at* is defined by Redhouse as 'a robe of honour', but 'also any honorific gift to an inferior', while Äzizbäy records the present meaning of Az. *khälät* as Russian *khalat* 'dressing gown, surgeon's gown, gift, a present for clothing or material for clothing'. It pointed to no trade in particular, but was a token of appreciation given to his master by an apprentice to any trade on graduation or passing out as a journeyman, as Muradyan points out, adducing Yu. Akhverdov's work on the guilds of Tiflis: 'At his initiation each apprentice was obliged to give his teacher a gift, called among them a *khalat*'. At that time, when the children of well-off citizens (*dostatochnykh mokalakov* = *mok'alak'e*-) were learning a trade in a guild, they gave to their teacher upon their initiation a shawl or cloth for a robe to the value of 30 or 40 silver roubles'.³¹ Given the relative social positions between giver and receiver specified by Redhouse's and Akhverdyan's definitions, Sayat'-Nova could be implying by his gift of a *khalat*' that his family was not poor, and was expected, and could afford, to give it. One must point out here, with respect to Sayat'-Nova's social status to be discussed below (pp. 15 ff) that there is no mention in the Azeri autobiography to his having been a serf.

With all that, it is far from improbable that Sayat'-Nova learned the trade of the weaver, a major industry in Georgia for centuries, to which many Muslim writers bear witness.³² At the beginning of the 13th century, the Venetian traveller Marco Polo could say of Georgia, 'silk is produced in great abundance. They also weave cloth of gold and all kind of very fine silk stuffs. The country ... has indeed no lack of anything, and the people live by trade and handicrafts'.³³ At the same time, the trade, especially the export side of it, could be lucrative. One has no figures to hand concerning the Caucasus, but in Cairo at the end of the 18th century the highest income class comprised 9 coffee exporters and 8 textile merchants.³⁴ In Sayat'-Nova's only reference to himself as a

³¹ *Cit.* Muradyan, pp. 58-59. See below, Chapter Two, p. 59.

³² R.B. Serjeant, *Islamic textiles, material for a history up to the Mongol conquest*, Beirut, 1972, pp. 72-73.

³³ *Ed.* Yule, I, p. 50. Cf. 'many a garment of great price, withal numberless brocades, broidered at the edges' (*Visramiani*, tr. Wardrop, p. 386); 'veils whose price it were hard to tell' (*Vep'khis tqaosani*, tr. Wardrop, p. 21).

³⁴ M.S. Meier, *Osmanskaya imperiya v XVIII veke, chertı strukturnogo krizisa*,

merchant, in Georgian, it is with respect to the purchase of cloth.³⁵ Is this purely imaginative, or is there a touch of genuine nostalgia in it, or irony, as in Omar the Tentmaker's quatrain in which he mocks his eponymous profession?:

Khayyâm, who used to sew the tents of learning,
Has fallen into misery's furnace, and there burns.
Death's scissors have severed the ropes of his life,
And Fate's brokers sell him off like trash found on the road.³⁶

In one of his very last poems, dated 1759, his final year as court minstrel, *Bedaslin vur khostz'ënis* 'The illbred fellow you bring to speak', Sayat'-Nova forms his metaphors round scarlet, variegated dyes, brocade, winding-sheet, shawl, and handkerchief.³⁷ Even if he had never been in the textile trade himself — and, adopting for the nonce Pascalian methodology, one could assert that it is a good odds-on bet — Sayat'-Nova was assuredly a good advertisement for it. Sayat'-Nova sometimes displays a disdain for the trader (which may not, however, extend to the artisan): *Akhir bu eshkh mani jalal eileir. Salup'tur bazara dalal eileir* 'This love makes me gross: it sends me to the market-place and makes me a hawker'.³⁸

Moscow, 1991, p.116. Another not so pleasant statistic, for 18th-century Sarajevo guilds in general, shows that master craftsmen occupied a middle position between rich and poor, while artisans 'of middle means' were nearer to the poor than to the rich. The Ottoman Empire is not the Caucasus, but some things are the same the whole world over.

³⁵ In *Gana me mshieri viqav* 'Was I hungry?', st. 3, vv. 3-4, Ioane, fol. 6, Baramidze, p. 51; see below, Chapter Two, p. 64, n. 37.

³⁶ خیام که خیمهای حکمت میدوخت
در کوره غم فتاد و ناگاه بسوخت
مقراض اجل طناب عمرش برید
دلّال قضا برایگانش بفروخت

Whinfield's rhymed version (*ed. cit.*, no. 83, p. 56), though there was no need to fudge the metaphorical allusion to the tent ropes in the unrhymed third verse, is excellent:

Khayyâm, who long time stitched the tents of learning,
Has fallen into a furnace, and lies burning.
Death's shears have cut his thread of life asunder,
Fate's brokers sell him off with scorn and spurning.

An alternative version might run:

Khayyâm, who the tents of learning once sewed,
Now burns in the furnace that is misery's abode.
Death's scissors have severed the ropes of his life.
Fate's brokers sell him cheap like trash from the road.

³⁷ See below, Chapter Six, p. 216.

³⁸ *Bu ashughluk* (This minstrelsy), *Tetrak*, p. 81.

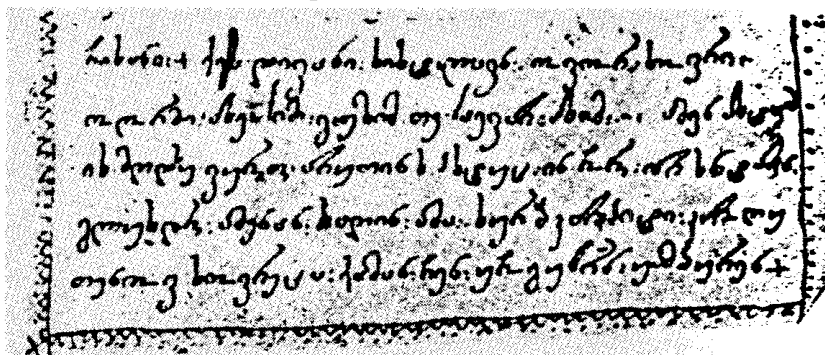
Whatever trade the young Arut'in learned, it is doubtful that he practised it for long — though, as rabbis the world over know, and act accordingly, it is good to have a practical skill to fall back upon if hard times come. Those who in any case intended to become merchants as, we have just seen, Sayat'-Nova once describes himself, learned a trade in their youth, as Castellan, writing in 1812, reports: 'They (the Armenians, 'nearly all of them merchants') all learn a craft in their youth, and cease to practice it when they begin to trade, or when they have earned enough to keep their family.'³⁹

In the same Azeri poem, Sayat'-Nova declares,

*On iedi t' amam ilum oldi, hala olmamisham dastan.
On sak'iz ilum t' amam oldi, gordum gulu gulustan*⁴⁰

'My seventeenth year ended, I had not yet become a public reciter.
My eighteenth year ended, I saw the Rose and the Rose Garden'

One might reliably take this to mean that by the age of eighteen, he *had* become a public reciter, one protesting his love for the Rose, in other words an *âshiq*, armenice *ashugh*, a minstrel, a troubadour. In an autobiographical note appended to his Armenian poem *Shat sirun is* 'You are very beautiful', which is placed at an angle of 45 degrees on the page for special aesthetic effect and decorated with a border of ringlets, Sayat'-Nova has written in Georgian script, in what is without any doubt his own hand, the following:⁴¹

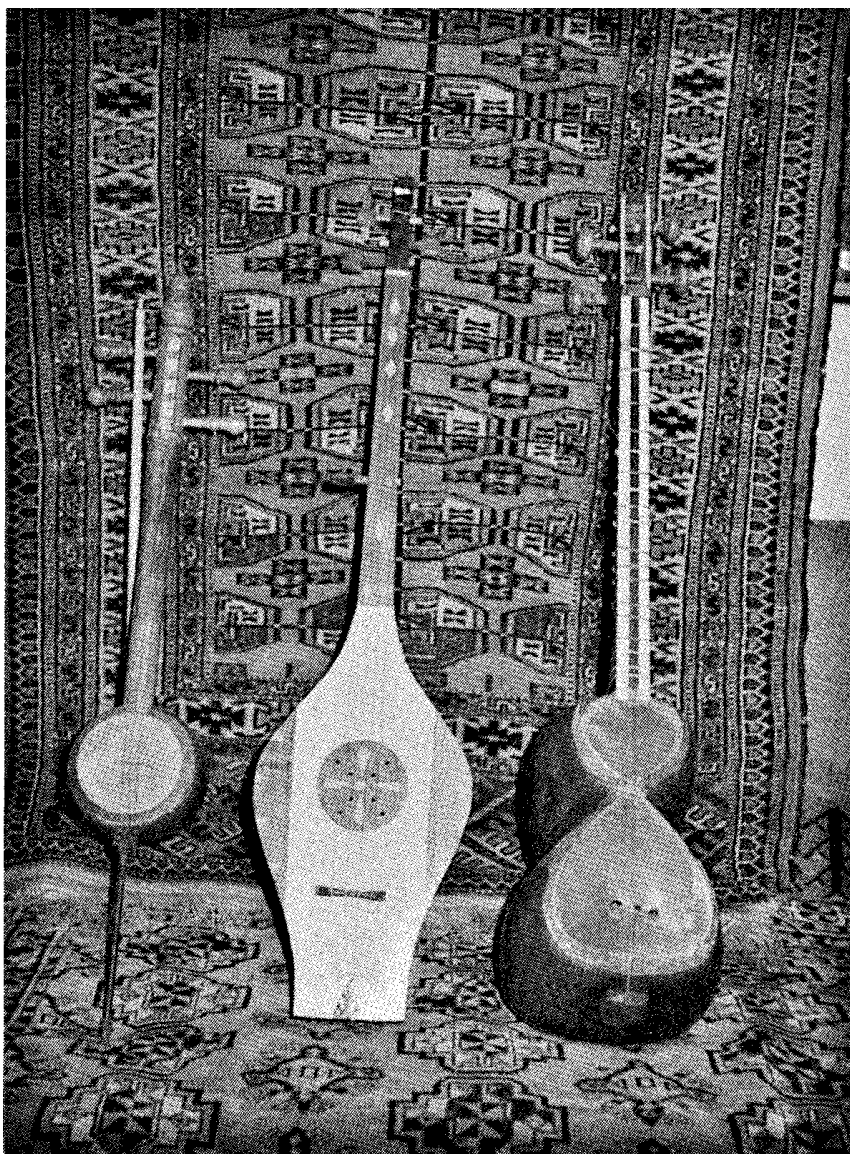


³⁹ *Mœurs, usages, costumes des Othomans et abrégé de leur histoire ... avec des éclaircissements tirés d'ouvrages et communiqués par M. Langlès*, Paris, 1812, t. 6, p. 64 (the above quotation is translated from the French). That such apprenticeships, in particular in the clothing trade, could lead to greater things, is exemplified by the career of the celebrated Russian Armenian General Lazarev, who 'up to the age of 20 ... worked as a journeyman tailor in the town of Baku' (Edmond O'Donovan, *The Merv Oasis*, London, 1882, vol. 1, p. 18).

⁴⁰ Chapter Two, pp. 58-59.

⁴¹ *Tetrak*, p. 102, Hasrat'yan, p. 10. That it is in the poet's own hand can be deduced not so much from the use of the first person, which a scribe could have reproduced, but

PLATE B



Modern examples of the instruments played by Sayat'-Nova: (from left to right) *k'amanch'a*, *ch'onguri*, *t'ar* ('[t']amburê').

'I, Arut'in, the son of a pilgrim, from the time I was little to my thirtieth year, devoted myself to all forms of play, but by the power of the Holy Precursor I learned the *k'amanch'a* and the *ch'ongur* and the [t']amburê' (a note in Armenian in Georgian script appended by Sayat'-Nova to *Shat sirun* is 'Thou art very beautiful', *Tetrak*, p. 102) The third instrument mentioned is unlikely to be the Turkish *tanbûr*, but rather the *t'ar* (see, p. 291, n. 148).

... *K' es divani khist lavn e. ovor sovri oghormi ase. Himi guzim t'e hayevar asim. amen astuadz is mghdsu vurt'i arut'ins pstutz' inch'ori iarsn tarin glukh dri amenan khaghin ama surb karapiti karoghut'enov sovretz'a k'amanch'en u ch'ongurn u amburen*

'This *divân*-poem is exceeding good. Whoever learns it, may he say a '(Lord) have mercy'. Now I wish to say something in Armenian. Amen, O God. I, Arut'in, son of a pilgrim, from the time I was little until the age of thirty gave myself (*glukh* = Grg *t'av* 'head, self') over to all (manner of) games [playing about?], but by the power of the Holy Precursor I learned the *k'amanch'a*, the *ch'ongurn* and the (*t'*)*ambur*.'

It would be futile to hope that anything said by Sayat'-Nova, even *hayevar*, itself a rare equivalent apparently for *hayerên* 'in the Armenian language', although the preceding poem *is* in Armenian, so that there is hardly any need for 'now', would be crystal clear, but it might appear that the poet felt himself, through the power of John the Baptist, as a 'voice crying in the wilderness', the patron saint of minstrels, to be perfect in his craft by the age of thirty. But that is an unlikely age to start, and the 'games' of his early years to which he refers must have included some minstrelsy, as his reference in the *Sujut'lama* to his seventeenth and eighteenth years suggest. Only to his celestial patron does he express gratitude for his musical gifts, as in the macaronic Ode to the Precursor composed half in Azeri, half in poor Classical Armenian.⁴² Nowhere does he clearly refer to a teacher of the instruments he mentions, certainly not by name, and one might reasonably infer *testimonio ex silentio* that he was self-taught. The normal term for the mentor of a poet and minstrel was Persian *pîr*, lit. 'old man'. Sayat'-Nova employs the word in his Azeri poem *Rahmat' p'ir ustada k'orp' i t'ik'ana* 'Mercy upon the old master building his bridge',⁴³ and in the verse *Rahmat' olsun p'ir ustadun janina* 'Mercy for the soul of

from the alphabetically macaronic mixture of the Georgian and Armenian scripts in the similarly situated and decorated poem on the facing page, which the poet, carried away by his split cultural identity (he wished also to mix in the Azeri script, which proved impracticable) wrote in roughly alternative Georgian and Armenian script, beginning *K' dard mi ani jan ow jigar mit'kēt divatz' ch'êtesne* (Arm. in bold) 'Do not cause pain, (my) soul and liver, may your mind see no demons'. The annotation in Georgian reads *K' ese divani kargi. adgils nt'k'omi zogi tsignis aso somkhuri zogi k'art'uli. t'at'aruli mindoda gameriva ama ar gavrive* '(In the name of) Christ, the ghazel is a good one. In places it is recited (!) sometimes with Armenian book-letters, sometimes Georgian; I wanted to mix in Tatar, but I did [could] not mix it in.'

⁴² *Et'ur gilan surb Karapit*, p. 9. A transcription cum translation of this *mukhamazi* is given by Hasrat'yan, pp. 80-81, beginning curiously *Mēshu sult'an surp' Karapit* 'Sultan of Mush, St. Karapet'.

⁴³ T p. 43, dated 19th March 1758; Ioane fol. 31A; H Az. no. 41, p. 179.

the old master' in *Bu ashughlugh mana kheili dar(d) oldi*,⁴⁴ but in the latter case, as one can see from the context, he is referring to himself, as almost certainly in the former also, since who is the Builder of Bridges apart from himself? Both poems were composed in 1758, when his own mastery was well established. His complaints in the *Bu ashughlugh mana kheili dar(d) oldi* 'This minstrelsy has brought me much sorrow', that *Alum ch'angli p'ira baghli k'imi dur*⁴⁵ 'My hand is a thing bound to the Old Man of the Lute' are not the words of an appreciative pupil to his master, and are to be taken figuratively. If Sayat'-Nova had had a *pîr*, it would have been less than generous not to acknowledge him, and there is no evidence that Sayat'-Nova was mean of spirit. What one would particularly like to know is Sayat'-Nova's relationship to the musicians' guild in Tiflis, for there is bound to have been one in his day, and whether he took part in the competitions organised by it.⁴⁶ There are romantic stories told about the old poet going over the wall of his monastery and taking part in such festivals, and, of course, invariably bearing the palm,⁴⁷ but whether there is the slightest grain of truth in them, in that they might relate to his possible — one is tempted to say probable — participation *before* he became a priest is a matter for conjecture.

Evidence in Sayat'-Nova's poems show that his career as a minstrel was closely linked, at least in his own mind, to Irakli II:

*Saiat' novas khelmtsip'e qen-shahbazi Iraklia*⁴⁸

'The ruler of Sayat'-Nova is Irakli, the royal-falcon khan.'

⁴⁴ T p. 80, lower half, dated 10th June 1758; Arasli, p. 41; st. 3, v. 1, Azeri no. 43, p. 181.

⁴⁵ See below, p. 184.

⁴⁶ Henry J. van Lennep (*Travels in little-known parts of Asia Minor*, I, pp. 253-254) and Theodor Menzel (*Meddâh, Schattentheater und Orta Oyunu*, Orientalisches Institut: Prag, 1941, pp. 63-4) were eye-witnesses at such competitions, the latter at Çankiri in 1926. M. Fuâd Köprülü-zâde, 'Âşık teşkilâtı ve âşık fasılları', *İkdam*, 12th April 1930, describes the guild, led by the *reis-i âşıkân*, at Constantinople, this article being translated into German by Hellmut Ritter, *Orientalia I, Istanbul Mitteilungen*, Istanbul, 1933, which reproduces also the amusing comedy in which Karagöz, whom some Turks regard as a Gypsy, defeats competitors from Salonica, Kayseri, etc., by cunning and ear-thumping, and bears off the prize of 20 gold pounds (refs. apud Menzel, *loc. cit.*).

⁴⁷ Gaysaryan, p. 37.

⁴⁸ In *Baghi bulbulit' avlia* 'The garden is full of nightingales', final verse, ed. Baramidze, p. 14. *P shâhbâz* has also the extended meaning of 'generous, noble' (Steingass). Cf. 'I am the minstrel of the King of Georgia' (*Sak'art'velos mep'is sazandari var*) in *Damijere*, Baramidze p. 10; see below, pp. 76, 141.



Tetrak, p. 103. The Armenian ghazal (*divanî*) *Dard mi ani* 'Do not cause (me) pain' written by Sayat'-Nova in alternate Armenian and Georgian script (he wished to have included the Azeri Arabic script also, but it clearly proved impracticable). It may serve, like his *Poem in Four Languages*, as a symbol of his culturally composite personality (see Chapter One, n. 41). As with the poem *Shat sirun* is on p. 102, there are four letters written outside the frame, reading clockwise starting from the lower margin, **d** (Georgian) **a** (Armenian), **v** (Georgian), and one illegible. Arm. *dav* means 'deception, trick', Georg. *dava* 'quarrel, complaint', Az. *dava* 'quarrel, campaign'; 'medicine', which may all be irrelevant, though the Georgian meaning 'complaint' fits the text. Compare the ambiguous use of *dav* in *Dun ên gêlkhên imastun is*, st. 3, v. 2, Ioane, fol. 64, Hasrat'yan, p. 20, Chapter 3, p. 95, n. 52.

It is certain, however, that he held no position under Irakli II when the latter was king of all Georgia with his capital at Tiflis: from 1744 to 1762, thus beyond the end of Sayat'-Nova's poetic activity in 1759, Irakli, as king of Kakhet'i, had his court at T'elavi, his father T'eimurazi II being for that period king of K'art'li at Tiflis.⁴⁹ There is strong evidence that Sayat'-Nova was officially a member of the retinue of Irakli's son and heir Giorgi, but certainly long prior to the latter's succession as king of K'art'li and Kakhet'i upon his father's death in 1780. In one Georgian poem emphasising the social distance between himself and his social betters, the poet says

*saiat'novas gurgen-khanis qmas amboben. mart'alia*⁵⁰

'They call Sayat'-Nova the serf of Gurgin Khan: it is the truth.'

Gurgin Khan was, it seems, an alias of the Crown Prince, the later Giorgi XII/XIII.⁵¹ His son, the Crown Prince T'eimurazi who commissioned the poet's son Ioane to record his father's poems in the 1823 manuscript, corroborates the above statement by Sayat'-Nova, whom he curiously misnames *Saadnama* and *Savat'nama* (cf. Ioane's *Sayat'noma*, below p. 411 n. p), in a note included in the catalogue of his library:

*Stikhni, ert'i sruli tsigni, saadnamasi, romelsa k'art'ulni savat'namas amboben. Ese iqo zhamsa mep'isa Irakli IIsa mep'is Giorgi XIII's baton-ishvilobashi sakut'rad, sabatonishvilo qma iqo mep'is Giorgisa da imas akhlda, magram khshirad mep'e Erakle IIs't'an iqo, radnagatz' diakh kargi sazandari, e.i. mesakrave, iqo. skhvat'a da skhvat'a instrumentt'a (e.i. sakravt'a) ukrevda da imgheroda. lek'satz'a t'vit've st'khzvida. igi iqo sanaieli, mep'is Giorgi XIII's batonishvilos sop'lisa sak'art'velos somkhet'agani, somkhursa da t'at'ruls simgherebsa da lek'sebsa st'khzevda, skhvat'a da skhvat' shemt'khvevat' zhamsa, t'vit'eulis shemt'khveulebis shesabami stikhebi simgherad sakvirvelad ut'k'oms azriani da shesabamieri. t'umtz'a litoni stikhebia mdabiurs gvarzed, magram didad mosatsoni.*⁵²

⁴⁹ See W.E.D. Allen, *A history of the Georgian people*, London, 1932, pp. 193-199.

⁵⁰ In *Sop'elsa da sop'elsa shua mt'as amboben, mart'alia* 'They say that between one village and another there is a mountain: it is the truth', l. 13, ed. Baramidze, p. 28.

⁵¹ *Gurgin-Khan* is given by J. Hanway, *A historical account of the British trade across the Caspian Sea*, London, 1753, and Krusinski, *History of the revolutions of Persia*, London, 1728, cit. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 351, n. 4, as a name of Giorgi XI, who in addition shared the name of Shah-Nawaz (II) with his father, Vakhtang V/Shah-Nawaz I, reigning 1675-88, 1691-5 (Allen, pp. 179-180). The profusion of names and the multiplicity of Georgian princes make identification a hazardous affair, but there is no reason to distrust T'eimurazi.

⁵² *Loc. cit. supra* (n. 13).

‘Poems, one complete book, by Saadnama, whom Georgian speakers call Savat’nama. He was, at the time of Irkali II, more precisely during the Crown Princedom of King Giorgi XIII, a Crown Prince *qma* of King Giorgi, and was attached to him (lit. was near him, *auprès de lui*), though he was often with King Irakli II, since he was a very good *sazandar*, that is, instrumentalist. He played and sang to many various instruments. He composed his own verses. He was of Sana(hin), from among the Armenians of the Crown Prince’s village, of King Giorgi XIII. He composed songs and poems in Armenian and Tatar on various occasions. For every occasion he composed fitting verses, melodious and wonderfully (constructed), meaningful and to the point. Although they are simple verses of a popular nature, they are exceptionally pleasing.’

The term *qma* has various meanings: (*hist.*) liege, vassal; (*hist.*) knight, brave man, hero; (*hist.*) subject; (*hist.*) dependent peasant, serf; (*hist.*) slave; (*fig.*) one’s obedient servant; (*hist.*) martyr; (*archaic*) boy, youth, apprentice; (Pshav, Khevsur) disciple or servant of a particular saint’ are those, in English translation, given by Tschenkeli. The most likely meaning here, that of ‘serf’, and the equally demeaning ‘boy’ would have rankled with the poet. Sayat’-Nova’s nature was the converse of servile, which must partly explain the trouble he had with the nobles of the Georgian court, and the king. If he calls himself a slave, it is only a conventional servitude to a mistress:

*Shen - lamazo, shen - baghdado, me - mona.*⁵³

‘You, O beautiful one, you, Baghdad silk, I, a slave!’

Elsewhere he declares that he would make a bad *qma*, and is proud of it:

Saiat’nova sheinakhe ch’inat’a.

*ver ishovi imist’ana karg qmasa!*⁵⁴

‘Keep Sayat’-Nova with the fine porcelain.

You will not find in him a good servant!’

Is it possible that Sayat’-Nova was, or had been, a *qma* in the feudal sense of ‘serf’? In 18th-century Georgia *qma* was not necessarily a mere figure of speech. The Code of Vakhtang VI (1703-1724) mentions various categories of serf, such as the *tsqalobis qma* ‘gift serf’, given by a patron to another class of serf, the *shetsqalebuli qma* ‘pardoned serf’, for services rendered; the *nebiери qma* ‘voluntary serf’, who ‘entered into a patron-and-client relationship of his own free-will ... and under certain circumstances could resume his freedom’; and the *nasqidi qma* or *glekhi*

⁵³ In *Aset’i tquili* ‘Such a lie’, final verse, ed. Baramidze, p. 42.

⁵⁴ In *Mezobelzed* ‘Whoever envies his neighbour’, final verse, ed. Baramidze, p. 20.

'bought serf' or 'peasant', who 'occupied a much lower status'.⁵⁵ In a quotation above, Sayat'-Nova refers to himself by just this lowly term of *glekhi* 'peasant'.⁵⁶ He does so in even greater particularity in another Georgian poem addressed to the King:

*Me glekhi var mitsaze dasakhuli*⁵⁷

'I am a peasant, domiciled on the soil'

And *nasqidi* 'bought' is the term he uses in the dismissal poem of 1759:

*nasqidi var shenis dzviris p'asit'a*⁵⁸

'I am something bought by you at a great price.'

He is proud to have been finely apparelled:

*Sheminakhe atlasit'a khasit'a*⁵⁹

'You kept me in satin and silk.'

Although in the poem he wrote to the King at the time of his dismissal he appears to be ready to accept most humble status

*Sajinibos daaqena tz'khent'ana*⁶⁰

'Put me in the stable with the horses'

it is a situation, even if seriously proposed, that he would wish to last.

But he is always defiantly on the side of the underdog, against the 'gentlemen':

*K'ėsanėn me qul ch'in pahum — agherumen bezaril im*⁶¹

'Twenty cannot keep one servant — I am sick of aghas.'

The prospect of a poor man who undertakes to devote his life to literature is, in every age, one in which starvation looms large. Dr. Johnson was forced into Grub Street, T.E. Lawrence joined the Air Force, T.S. Eliot became a banker. For Sayat'-Nova, serfdom may have offered a certain security, especially if his master left him free to develop his poetical and musical talents, or indeed engaged him by virtue of them.

⁵⁵ References and definitions from Allen, pp. 232-3.

⁵⁶ P. 6.

⁵⁷ In *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice', v. 7, ed. Baramidze, p. 17; I fol. 17, v. 9, has ... *alagzed dasakhuli* 'domiciled on (his own?) place', which is prouder.

⁵⁸ *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, st. 2 v. 2, Baramidze, p. 21, I (v. 3), fol. 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, st. 2 v. 4, B p. 28, I fol. 9.

⁶⁰ *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, B p. 77 l. 8. The alternative rendering of the aorist as indicative, not imperative, 'You placed me in the stable with the horses', is not realistic.

⁶¹ *Ashkharės me p'anjara ě*, st. 3 v. 4, T p. 133, I fol. 63A, H (Armenian n. 53), p. 70.

Serfdom may explain why Sayat'-Nova mentions the late age of thirty as the date of his maturity as a minstrel: he may have been bound to his liege lord, Gurgen-Khan, till that age, and then bought himself free, or was set free. But the 'games' or 'playing around' of his early years does not sound like the way of life of a serf, unless his master were particularly indulgent, in which case Sayat'-Nova's remark would seem like ingratitude — if, indeed, it was as bitter as it sounds, and not merely rueful and self-deprecatory. Furthermore, if Sayat'-Nova were, as he claims in his autobiographical Azeri poem, and as others have claimed for him, an artisan, apprenticed at the age of twelve and passed out as skilled at the age of fourteen, he would have been a member of guild, of which there were many in Georgia, a most unlikely serf. Nevertheless, he clearly considered himself a bought thing, and it seems certain that Gurgen-Khan was the purchaser, though nowadays we might, with greater delicacy but lesser awareness of social realities, call him his employer. With all that, it is certainly possible that Sayat'-Nova's father, as an immigrant from Syria, was or had been a serf in the strict feudal sense. The honorific title of *mahtesi* predicates a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, al-Quds, the Holy City, but could be borne by a member of any class of society, though one who somehow found the time to undertake such a journey, possibly to some extent financed by the Church. In his colophons of 1765/6 Sayat'-Nova is no doubt proud to style himself the son of a *mahtesi* — at that time, the days of his glory gone, as a lowly *k'ahanay* or married parish priest, he had little left to be proud about — but he clearly never made the pilgrimage himself.

One must, unwillingly in this section which deals with the facts of Sayat'-Nova's life, anticipate the theories about the date of his birth, to be discussed later (pp. 31-). If Sayat'-Nova were born in 1712, as usually stated, he would have been 32 when Irakli II was crowned King of Kakhet'i at T'elavi in 1744 at the age of 28.⁶² Giorgi, one of Irakli's sons, could not have been much more than 8. In 1759, when the poem mentioning his status as *qma* was probably composed, Sayat'-Nova was ca. 47, and Giorgi ca. 23. Thus for the whole of his career, his master must

⁶² On this reckoning Sayat'-Nova and Irakli, born 1716, were roughly of the same age. It is possible that they were exactly of the same age, if the 1759 ode *Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak'* 'May ye know that one year produced me and my beloved friend' (T p. 127, H p. 75) should refer to Irakli. If there is any truth in this, one could, 1712 resting on no firm evidence, date the poet's birth also at 1716.

have counted for him as a *manuk*, a child or youth: in Georgian, with an ambiguity that Sayat'-Nova would have found delicious, a *qma*, making himself the child of a child. A prince, moreover, for whom few had any respect. Allen dubs him 'slothful, weak, and gluttonous', whose succession to the throne his father attempted to thwart in favour of a younger son. At the time of his accession in 1780 as Giorgi XII/XIII he was, Allen relates, devout, middle-aged (ca. 44 by our reckoning), and dropsical. During the revolt in 1799-80, Monteith related, of his brothers Farnavazi, Alexander, Yuloni and Vakhtang, 'Giorgi lay ill to death of dropsy in Tiflis, and was more concerned with the careful reparation of the miraculous icon of St. George of Bodchorma by the jeweller Gabriel than with the things of this world.' He died on 28th December 1800, 'despised and detested by his subjects and having been for a considerable time quite incapable of moving from excess of corpulence and dropsy'.⁶³ It would appear from this that Sayat'-Nova's complaint that he was subject to this unloved prince would have awakened much sympathy among his listeners, including the King himself, as was probably the poet's intention.

Sanahin lay in Georgian Armenia (Somkhet'i) in the region of Pambaki, south of Tashiri, and from the time of David II the Restorer (Aghmoshenebeli, 1089-1125) depended, as being west of the R. Kura, on Tiflis, the capital of K'art'li, and not on T'elavi, the capital of Kakhet'i. Since his father did not become King of K'art'li and Kakhet'i (having ruled the latter from 1744) until 1762, Giorgi must have received Sanahin as his apanage⁶⁴ from the ruling king of K'art'li, his grandfather T'eimurazi II. His son T'eimurazi Batonishvili, in his above account, sees nothing strange in this, which inclines one to believe that it conformed to regular practice. No doubt Giorgi received Sanahin and other regions in Georgian Armenia as a child, possibly even at birth, which explains Sayat'-Nova's resentment at being subject to one so junior in years. That Giorgi has a special interest in Sanahin is illustrated by the fact that on 10th May 1796, almost a year to the day after Sayat'-Nova's probable death during Agha Muhammad's raid on Tiflis, while still Crown Prince he, as 'the administrator of P'ambak and Lori', ratified its ancient privileges.⁶⁵

⁶³ Allen, pp. 214-5, p. 215 n. 7.

⁶⁴ 'Il était du village arménien de Sanain, compris dans l'apanage du prince Giorgi', M.-F. Brosset, tr. T'eimurazi Batonishvili, *Catalogue des livres géorgiens tant imprimés que manuscrits anciens et modernes*, Ac. Imp. des sc., St.-Petersbourg, 1838, pp. 107-8.

⁶⁵ The signatories were 'the baron Giorgi, Shakako, melik of P'ambak, Melik-Beg, melik of P'ambak, Rim-Beg and Mahmad-Agha, Seïd-Beg, Abdul-Agha and we the *khet'khudas* [P *kad-khudâ* 'chief citizen'] of P'ambak, the lands and communities of the

In a Georgian note to the allegorical poem *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs varskvlavis skhivi* 'How shall the ray from a star dry up the sea?', Ioane suggests that his father was in the service of another Georgian prince, Vakhtang:

*ese t'ejnisis nat'k'vami igavit' magalit'it' landzghva saiat'novas t'elavshi metar (for netar) khsenebuli vakhtang batoni shvilt'an gadahkidebia, ugunuri katz'i ik've moukhsenebia ch'ghna tselsa*⁶⁶

'This is recited in the form (*khma* lit. 'voice, mode') of a *tejnîs* (allegory), a scolding with enigmas and (parallel) examples.⁶⁷ In T'elavi with the late Vakhtang Batoniashvili (prince of the blood royal), Sayat'-Nova incurred the enmity of a senseless fellow. He refers to it here, in the year 1751'.

If this is accurate, and one must remember that it was written in 1823, long after the event, Sayat'-Nova was at that date a member of the retinue of another member of the royal family, surely Vakhtang, a younger brother of Giorgi, one of those who were to revolt against him in 1799/80.

Unlike certain other nations of high cultural achievement, notably the Persians, who are lax in such matters, the Armenians are where their monuments and manuscripts are concerned very particular about dates. Perhaps because for them, as believers in a God who appeared on earth for a certain number of years, time was important. Omar Khayyâm's view of mankind as a nothing, founded on wind, between two nothingnesses,⁶⁸ which hardly encourages a respect for chronology, finds no

monastery of Sanahin', Brosset, *Description...*, p. 89. In Ancient Armenia Sanahin was in the province of Uti and Lori in that of Gugark', but as Hübschmann says of the latter with respect to other localities, the 'weite Begrenzung der späteren georgischen Provinz hat niemals für den armenischen Kanton Geltung gehabt' (*Die altarmenischen Ortsnamen*, Indogermanische Forschungen, Bd. XVI (1904), p. 356).

⁶⁶ Ioane, fol. 16A, where the first verse differs from Baramidze, p. 29, above preferred.

⁶⁷ The APT *tejnîs*, G *igavi*, *magalit'i*, all near synonyms, are paralleled by the *trobar clus* of the troubadours of medieval Europe, where the equivalent of *landzghva* was also known, as *plainte*.

⁶⁸ ... در میان دو عدم / اطراف بود تو در میان هیچ نه. *dar miyân-i dû 'adam / atrâf bûd-i tû dar miyân hîch na'i*, ed. E.H. Whinfield, quatrain no. 424, vv. 3-4. Fitzgerald omitted to translate this quatrain. Whinfield's version has merit:

O unenlightened race of humankind,
Ye are a nothing, built on empty wind!
Yea, a mere nothing, hovering in the abyss,
A void before you, and a void behind!

A literal translation of the quatrain would be, 'O you who are ignorant of the way the world works, you are nothing. / Your foundation is on wind, wherefore you are nothing. / There is a boundary present between two nothingnesses. / The parameters of your existence are in between: you are nothing.'

favour with Armenians. We are therefore fortunate in that many of Sayat'-Nova's poems bear the dates of their recital, both in the *Tetrak* of 1765/6, and Ioane's manuscript of 1823. The earliest so dated, the second poem on p. 63 of the *Tetrak*, is the light Azeri love-song, *Deriadan ch' (ě)khup'san khob inji marjan* 'From the ocean you have taken fair pearls and coral', which bears in the margin, in Georgian, the date 1st June ("the hay-making month") 430 of the chronicon, i.e. A.D. 1742. The earliest dated Armenian poems, two in number, belong to 441 of the chronicon, *Dun ên gěłkhên imastun is* 'You are surely wise', so dated by Ioane,⁶⁹ and *Ari indz angach kal* 'Come and listen to me', according to Akhverdyan dated in the *Tetrak* 1st May 441, though now lost.⁷⁰ The Georgian poems, apart from the one above mentioned as of 1751 of the Christian era, are undated. It is otherwise unknown, for any of Sayat'-Nova's poems to be dated other than according to the chronicon, and one must hope that Ioane, in deviating from this normal style, has not erred. In their intent, the Georgian poem *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs...* and the Armenian poem *Dun ên gěłkhên ...* have much in common: they are appeals to somebody not to listen to slander against the poet. The somebody is most probably Irakli II, whence one could deduce that it was he whom Sayat'-Nova considered his royal patron by 1751, even though in the Georgian poem of probably 1759, he says he is the *qma* of another, probably the king's eldest son Giorgi, and Ioane intimates that he was a member of the king's younger son Vakhtang in 1751. The situation is, typically, far from clear. One could harmonise the facts as stated by assuming that the mention of being the *qma* of Gurgen Khan/Giorgi referred to the poet's childhood, that he was in 1751 officially a member of Prince Vakhtang's retinue, and that he performed, without being the official court minstrel, before the King, to whom he came to feel himself particularly bounden.

We can deduce from the date and contents of his last poems that his connection with the court at T'elavi ended in 1759. The circumstances and reasons for this dismissal, being predominantly hypothetical, will form the subject of a later chapter. Shortly, if not immediately, after his departure, he took holy orders and functioned as a married parish priest

⁶⁹ I fol. 64r.

⁷⁰ H no. 16, p. 28. According to his note, p. 28, this was one of the seven poems that were at Akhverdyan's disposition when he possessed the *Tetrak* upon which he prepared his 1852 edition; between its composition in 1765/6 and its deposition in the Literature Museum of Erevan in 1921, several folios were lost (see Gaysaryan, p. 56).

(*k'ahanay*) in Anzal on the shores of the Caspian, in the province of Gilan. This is known from the colophons of the manuscript of Grigor Narekatzi's *Book of Lamentations* (*Oghbergut'ean Matean*) he copied in A.D. 1761/2, the main colophon reading, somewhat ungrammatically

*Gretz'aw i Gilan Anzali ekeghetz'in t'vin řmž. Ov ěnt'ertz'ogh, yishea gtsogh Step'anos vardapet, or Sayead Novay asin, ew hayr im matisi (sic) Karapet, ew duk' yisheal linik'. arajnordut'ean Hakhpto Zak'ariay v(ar)t'(apet) T'ip'lizt'i'*⁷¹

'This was written in Gilan, in the church of Anzal, in the year 1210 [inc. 12th/23rd September 1760]. O reader, remember the scribe, me Step'anos vardapet, whom they call (called?) Sayead Novay, and my father, the pilgrim Karapet, and you also shall be remembered. In the priorate of Hakhp(a) (of) Zak'ariay of Tiflis, vardapet.'

A notice on fol. 1r states *Step'anos k'ahanayis ě g(i)rk's*, 'This book is of [copied by] me, Step'anos *k'ahanay*'. He names himself as *Tĕr Step'anos k'aynays* [sic] on fol. 251r, and *Tĕr Step'anos k'ayanays* on fol. 36r, and on fol. 255r simply as *Step'anos k'ahnay-in*.⁷² The possible importance of his writing *ay* for *a* and his ignoring the *-h-* of his title of *k'ahanay* will be referred to below in discussing his pen-name.⁷³ Ch'ugaszyan states that a comparison of the form of the characters in this manuscript with those of the manuscript of 1765/6 and those (which?) of the *Tetrak* show irrefutably that this Anzal manuscript is in the hand of Sayat'-Nova.⁷⁴ There is an uncertainty here with respect to Sayat'-Nova's ecclesiastical status. A *k'ahanay* in the Armenian Orthodox Church is a married priest serving in a parish (in his case administered by Zak'aria, *arajnord* ('suffragan bishop') of Haghpat). As a priest he would have the honorific title of *Tĕr* (literally 'Lord', parallel to the title of 'Sir' attached to priests in Shakespeare's time), and be called by his parishioners a *tĕrtĕr*. But in the Armenian Church the title of *vardapet* was reserved for ecclesiastics who had passed a series of examinations and were members of a monastery, of course celibate.⁷⁵ Sayat'-

⁷¹ Cit. B. Chugaszyan, *Sayat'-Novayi ěndorinakats norahayt dzeřagir matyan* [A newly discovered manuscript copied by Sayat'-Nova], *Lraber*, Erevan, 1981, no. 3, p. 67. The MS, accessioned as *matenadaran* (Erevan) MS no. 10838, was discovered by Melk'set' Poghosyan of the village of Jrařat in the Hrazdan region.

⁷² Cit. Ch'ugaszyan, pp. 66-7.

⁷³ Pp. 70-72.

⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ See Malkhasyantz', s.v., mg. 3, '(eccl.) a scholarly rank which at one time (*mi zhamanak*) [it is, of course, still current in the Armenian Church, C.D.], after special examinations, they conferred on a divine with a particular blessing and a vardapet's

ԼԵՂՈՒԼԻՆ ՀԱՅՈՅ: Խ ԺԺԷ: ԳԻՐ ՄԱՐԱՊԵՆ
 ԿՈՆԷ. ՄԱՆՈՒ ՄԵՐԻՆ ԱԶԻՆԵՂԻՆԻԴԷ. ԽԱԿ
 ԽԵՂԳԵՄԻՆԻՆ. Ե ԿԱՐԻ ԾՆ. Ե ՏՈՒԿԵ: ՆՈՒ
 ՀԱՆՔԵՆ. ԵՐԵՔ ԳԻՐ ՄԱՐԱՊԵՆ ԽԵՆՈՅՄ
 ԿԱՐԳԵՆ ՀԱՄԱՆԻՆ ԽԵՆԱՐԱՆԻ ՄԱՆԻՆ. ԵՅ
 ՔԷ Է ԴՈՒ ՔԻՆԱՐԻՆ ԲԱՆԻՆԵՅՈՐ. Ե ԼԺԷ ՔԻՆԱՐ
 Է ԴՈՒ ՎՃԻՆԻՆ ՄՈՂԱՊԷՆ ԱՆԻՆԶԵ ՄԱՅԻՆ
 Է ՄԱՐԱՊԵՆ. ԱՆ. ԳԻՐ յԱՆԱՊ ՄՈՒՐ. Ե
 ԼԺԵ ԱՆ ԱՆԵՂԻ ԿԱՂ ՎԺՈՒԱԿԱՆԵՆ Ե ՈՒ
 ՊԵՂ ՄԱՍ: ՎԵՐԵՅՄԱՆ Ե ԿԱՆՈՅ ՔԱՐ ՎԱ
 ՄԱՐԷՆ. ԵՂ ՐԵՆԼԵՐԵՅՈՂ յԻՂԵԱՂ ՎՔԺ
 ՈՂ ՎԵՐՈՐ ՂԵՂԱՊԱՐԱՄ ՄԱՆԵ ՎԱՆՈՒՄ
 ԲԱՅ ՀԱՆԱՊԻՆ ՈՐ ՄԱՆԱՐ. ՆՈՂԱՂ ԿԱՂԷՆ
 Ե ՀԱՅՐԵՆ ԽՈՒ ՂԵՂԱՆԻ ԿԱՐԱՊԵՄԻՆ
 Ե ՂԵՂԱՐ ԽՈՒ ՄԱՐԱՐԱՂ. Ե ԴՈՒՔ յԻՂԵԱՂ
 ՀԵՆԻՔ յԱՍՈՒ
 ՂԵ ԼԺԷ
 ՄԱՆԻՆ
 ...

Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, fol. 276v: 'In the year of the Armenians 1215 (A.D. 1765/6) ... (this) was written in Kakhoy K'arvasarê. O reader, remember the scribe of this book, this sinful Step'anos k'ayhanay whom they call Sayad Novay and my father, the pilgrim (*mahtesi*) Karapet and my mother Sarray, and you will be remembered before God, Amen.'

Nova had had no time to take such examinations, and it is doubtful whether he was at that time widowed, and so eligible for monkhood. He would seem, therefore, in both respects to be unqualified to bear the title. It is just possible that he had received permission to use it from his superior Zak'aria, who may even have conferred it as a sop in view of his secular eminence, now surrendered. Or it may be that Sayat'-Nova, who as poet, singer and musician, would for many years have been accustomed to be addressed as *usta* 'master', used *vardapet*, etymologically 'master of education',⁷⁶ in its ancient and modern secular meaning of 'teacher, doctor'.⁷⁷ Certainly Sayat'-Nova would have been conscious that he could teach something. Many annotations in the *Tetrak* are addressed to 'whomsoever would learn' such and such a song.⁷⁸ His teaching abilities would not, however, have included what must have been a staple of ecclesiastical training, Classical Armenian or *grabar*, in which the scriptures and commentaries were written, since his knowledge of this learned form of Armenian was not good. On fol. 146r of the Anzal manuscript, he excuses his omission of Narekatz'i's chapter 41, writing *Greal ê saghmos zhamaygrk'in, ast och' eda. târ êstep'anos k'ayanays* '(This) psalm is written in the service-book, it has not been placed here. Târ Step'anos, priest'. This should read **greal ê (ays) saghmos(s) i zhamagirsan, ast och' edaw. târ step'anos k'ahanay*. In misplacing ch. 86 on fol. 276r, he writes a note in its proper place on fol. 315r, or *greal ê arajin varaghi* 'which is written on a first [meaning previous] leaf'. Since *varagh* is a late loanword (APTaz *waraq*, *vărăq*)

staff'; mg. 5, '(eccl.) a celibate priest (*k'ahanay*) who lives in a monastery or who by order of a spiritual authority is sent to this or that town as a preacher, [bishop's] representative (*yajord*), director of church affairs.' See below, p. 125 n. 24.

⁷⁶ Though the compound is unattested in Iranian, the word is composed of two Iranian elements, *vard* 'increase, growth', here intellectual (the word is connected with German *werden* 'become', and Persian *vard* 'flower, rose', cf. Gk. *phytón* 'plant', *phúô* 'grow, come into being'), conjunct vowel -a-, and *pet* 'chief' (Avestan *paiti*-).

⁷⁷ This ancient meaning is given by *NBHL*, II (1837), but with respect only to early texts, such as NT and Eghishê, in which it renders Gk. *didáskalos*, Syriac *rabbi*. In 1875-9 Bedrossian lists examples as 'D.D., M.D.'; LL.D. is adumbrated by *vardapet awrinatz'*, rendering NT *nomodidáskalos*, and designating the Persian *mogpet* (Eghishê, cit. *NBHL*). Malkhasyantz' gives only a 19th-century instance of this meaning, which shows how unusual it was for a layman to have such a title: 'S. Nazaryan printed his name on his books with the title of "vardapet of oriental philology", on account of which his adversaries satirically called him "the vardapet without a cowl (*anveghar vardapet*)".' A secular teacher is normally a *varzhapet*, a master craftsman (*usta*) a *varpet*. One may note the modern Persian usage of *ustâd* as 'university professor'.

⁷⁸ T p. 102, H (Arm.) no. 4, p. 10; T p. 107, H (Arm.) no. 8, p. 18; T p. 116, H (Arm.) no. 24, p. 37. The formula is not necessarily Sayat'-Nova's own.

not in Classical Armenian (though it features legitimately in the poet's own verse), and *arajin* 'first' is a mistake for e.g. *yaṛajagir* or *yaṛajag-natz'*, this should have read *or greal ê (or kay) i yaṛajagir t'ght'i. He uses the correct word *t'ught'* for 'folio' when excusing himself for placing ch. 90 before ch. 78 on fol. 278r, but again with errors: *ays aghôt's yarjin t'ght'is greal ê. mi me(gh)adir linik'* 'this prayer on this [i.e. a] first [i.e. previous] folio (is) written as 78. Do not be censorious.⁷⁹ *Aghôt'k'* 'prayer' is a true *pluralis tantum*, no singular form *aghôt'* being attested. The sentence should read, *ays aghôt'k' i yaṛajagir t'ght'i greal en. mi meghadir linik'*. One has no right to be censorious. On a 15th-century document 'signed' by the priests of Venice, supposed to be at least *literati*, roughly half of them inscribed a cross or a similar device. One has already above expressed reservations about the quality of education at Sanahin.⁸⁰ In any case, Sayat'-Nova's attempts at Classical Armenian composition are richly paralleled by those of other scribes. The renaissance of Armenian scholarship is almost entirely due to the Mekhitharists, whose monastery at San Lazzaro by Venice dates from 1740, too early to have had any effect on their contemporaries, non-Catholic, of Sanahin. From which one must conclude, however, that there was nothing strange about Sayat'-Nova having eventually the rank of *vardapet*. In 1760, however, it seems premature. The poet uses it, it must be noted, only once. Perhaps one must bow to the authority of Babgen Kiuleserian, himself a *tsayragoyn* or 'superior' *vardapet*, the equivalent of an Oxford senior doctorate, or more realistically a Lambeth D.D., who states that 'the title of *vardapet* was not specifically confined to the celibate clergy, but deserving ecclesiastics, without discrimination as to whether they were celibate or married, might become *vardapet*'.⁸¹ That was doubtless so in the early Middle Ages in Armenia when the word, as we have noted above, still had the scriptural meaning of 'teacher, doctor'. But by the beginning of the 20th century the term, as Kiuleserian records, was used in the sense of 'monk' (*abeghay*,

⁷⁹ These details are found in Ch'ukaszian, pp. 66-7. One may add from his Kakhi MS of 1765/6, by which time the poet's Classical Armenian had not improved, his appeal on fol. 100v: *ov ênt'ertz'ogh yisheay i s(ur)b aghôt's k'oy zgtsoğ meghaypart zstep'anos k'ahanyeays ew iwr tsnoghatz'n* 'O reader, remember in your prayers the scribe, the sinful Step'anos, priest, and his parents.' This should read, *ov ênthertz'ogh yishea ... meghapart ... k'ahanays ... ziwr tsoğhsn*.

⁸⁰ Above, p. 8.

⁸¹ *Vardapetut'ean astichaně hay ekeghetz'woy mēj* [The grade of *vardapet* in the Armenian Church], Anthélias, 1980, p. 70.

vanakan).⁸² The *vardapet* Yovhannês Ghrimetz'i in describing the slaughter of the monks of Haghpāt in Tiflis in 1795, quoted below,⁸³ calls them indiscriminately *vardapets*, and it is certain that the *brothers* would not have been spared. Khelashvili, in describing his encounter with Sayat'-Nova at Haghpāt, refers to him invariably, more than half a dozen times, as a *vart'apeti*.⁸⁴ But this was supposedly at a time when Sayat'-Nova had been a monk for several years. A verse in the Georgian poem *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head', discussed in Chapter Four, suggests that he was, as a sexagenarian, promoted to a higher rank, and this possibly means that ca. 1772 he was granted the title of *vardapet* on entering the monastery of Haghpāt.⁸⁵ In 1760 he was not a monk, so that his right then to the title remains doubtful. Ch'ugaszyan adds *k'anahay* 'married priest' to the number of those who might legitimately bear the title, though he gives no examples of such practice other than that here under discussion, which is a circular argument and begs the question, though *cum pietate*, in the poet's favour.⁸⁶

How many months or years Têr Step'anos remained at Anzal is unknown. Too long for him, the most reluctant priest in Armenian records, that is for sure. The trading post on the Caspian shore was Ovid's Tomis, and Narek's *Lamentations*, which he chose to copy there, were Ovid's *Tristia*. Sayat'-Nova's feelings at this time will be discussed below in connection with his poems of the relevant years, principally the Georgian *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'Come, my wretched head.' The exile at Anzal cannot have lasted all of eight years, for by 1765/6 he was back in Georgia, though 94 m. E of Tiflis, still among merchants and travellers, at Kakhi Caravanserai near Zakatali in Kakhēt'i, where by then he had copied Matenadaran MS no. 4270, comprising, surely revealingly, also *Ecclesiastes*, for whom all was Vanity.

At some date unknown, but probably shortly after the death of his wife Marmar in 1768,⁸⁷ Sayat'-Nova became a monk in the monastery of

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸³ P. 37.

⁸⁴ *Kalmasoba*, pp. 226-227, *cit.* below, pp. 41 ff.

⁸⁵ St. 4, v. 3; see below, p. 124.

⁸⁶ *Dzeřagrerī ashkharhum* [In the world of manuscripts], Erevan, 1985, p. 86.

⁸⁷ According to the text of a Georgian epitaph on a gravestone in the Khojivank' Mother of God church in the Havlabar quarter seen and published by Akhverdyan, but which had disappeared by the end of the 19th or beginning of the 20th century when, despite protests, the gravestones were removed and reused (Melikset'-Bek, *Tiflisskii listok*, 1912, nos. 163, 205). The epitaph, of the existence of which there is no reason to doubt, read *K'(ronik)s UNV / K' sap'lavsa / amas shina va- / -r saiat'novi- / -s meughle /*

Haghpat, situated some 75 kms south-south-west of Tiflis. The abbots of Sanahin, with which Haghpat, 7 kms to the east, was united, in his day were Grigol (1734-?) and Abraham (1784-1797).⁸⁸ It is possible that Irakli and his son Giorgi had a hand in this translation, since the Bagratid rulers of Georgia maintained, doubtless for reason of pietas and family pride, a close interest in the affairs of these monasteries founded in the tenth century by Khosrov-Anush, queen of the first Bagratid monarch of Armenia, Ashot I. The monasteries, as mentioned above,⁸⁹ fell within the apanage of the Crown Prince Giorgi, who on the 10th May 1796 ratified, following Rustem in 1652 and anticipating Irakli II on 18th April 1797, their ancient privileges and extensive possessions, including vineyards, agricultural land, and mills, exempt from tax and protected by local nobles and community leaders,⁹⁰ all of which denoted a high degree of prosperity.⁹¹ As a member of these establishments, Sayat'-Nova was in no danger of starving, though it is possible that the abstemiousness reported by Grigor Magistros in the 11th century⁹² continued in his day. The monasteries suffered

marmar she- / -ndoba mi- / -bdzanet' 'In 456 of the chronicon, (in) Ch(rist), in this tomb am I, the wife of Sayat'nova Marmar, say a blessing' (P.P. Muradyan, *Armenianskaya èpigráfica Gruzii - Tbilisi*, Ak. Nauk Arm. SSR, Erevan, 1988, pp. 98-99).

⁸⁸ Brosset, *Description...* (quoted above, n. 20), p. 93.

⁸⁹ P. 19.

⁹⁰ See above, n. 65.

⁹¹ A list of the possessions of Sanahin contained in a copy of a purported charter of Rustem dated 1652 from a *Kütük* (T 'log, register') recorded by Sargis Ĵalalian in his *Ānaparhut'wn i Mecn Hayastan* [Journey into Greater Armenia], t. 1, Tiflis, 1842 (translated by Brosset, *Description...*, pp. 87-88), specifies villages, hills, plains, mills, vineyards 'in the localities of Somkhet'i [Georgian Armenia] and the Ba[g]ratians as have been in your possession up to the present.' A ruined location in Somkhet'i 'belonging to the kings our blessed and excellent ancestors where your predecessors, the archbishops of the holy monastery, had built a church' is to remain exempt of any royal tax, and all royal and local officials are instructed to honour this. The document is recorded as ratified by Shah-Navaz in 1108 [Arm., AD 1658/9], and by 'Irakli III [*sic*], king of all Georgia and Kakhet'i, etc.' in 1146 [Arm., AD 1696/7, which Brosset identifies as an error on Ĵalalian's part for 1246, AD 1796/7]. The mention of possessions up to Tiflis, 75 kms to the NNE across the Somkhet'ian mountain range, seems exaggerated. Though Brosset clearly treats the copy of the document as genuine, the several errors in the date give one pause, and make one reflect that such a document would have been very useful to place before the Tsar's tax officials after the Russian annexation of Georgia between 1801 and 1813. The place-names mentioned, some of which seem otherwise unrecorded, must be genuine: there would be no point in claiming non-existent sites. The *Kütük* clearly calls for further investigation. That Haghpat and Sanahin would have had time and opportunity to benefit by their royal connections, however, is beyond question.

⁹² See above, p. 7 n. 20.

damage at the hands of Agha Muhammad's incursion into Georgia in May 1795,⁹³ which explains Sayat'-Nova's presence in Tiflis, and his probable death at the raiders' hands during their seizure of the city in September of that year. But a result of the royal interest is the present good state of preservation of these historic buildings, including the Grigor Magistros hall at Sanahin where the poet might have been a pupil,⁹⁴ and doubtless (though no indication of its exact location is now to be found) the cell or cells at Haghpāt where he spent his last decades. It was in a cell at Haghpāt that the Georgian deacon Ioane Khelishvili claimed to have met him at a date unknown, finding the old monk, his lute hanging on the wall, still nostalgic for his former minstrelsy. The visit, as will be suggested below, is probably fictitious; but that the (initially at least) reluctant monk hankered for a time after past glory accords with the sentiments of his final recorded poem, *She satsqalo...*

The poet was married, and had a family, details of which are not fully known. The epitaph transcribed by Akhverdyan mentioned above gives her name as *Marmar* (Persian, 'soft, delicate'), and the date of her death as 1768. Hasrat'yan, on what evidence is unknown, adds that she left four children born over a period of ten to eleven years.⁹⁵ A son Ioane, as we have seen, flourished in 1823, and it is probably he who, following the family tradition of using his father's *divan* as an exercise-book, partly wrote his name in a mixture of Armenian and Georgian characters as *Iva* (իջւ) for *Ivan* (as he signs himself in his own manuscript):⁹⁶ all one can say for sure is that this was done in or after 1765, the date of the *Tetrak*. The name *Gigo* (hypocoristic for *Grigor* or *Grigoli*) written in a

⁹³ An inscription on a silver reliquary recorded by Jalalian, *op. cit.*, p. 48, translated by Brosset, *Description*, p. 90, by the Catholicos Ioseb, reads: 'After the devastation of Georgia by the Persian Agha Mahmad Khan in 1244 [Arm., AD 1795], I journeyed to my country by order of Catherine, Empress of Russia, with supporting troops. Coming to present my homage to our monasteries of Haghat and Sanahin, I beheld their devastation, and overcome by grief, decided to decorate this reliquary ...' Ioseb was a prince of the Arghutinski-Dolgoruki family, 'descendant des Mkhargrdzelis, célèbres au XII et XIII siècles, et propriétaires du couvent de Sanahin' (Brosset).

⁹⁴ See above, p. 7 n. 20.

⁹⁵ H p. xxxiii. H. Peterman, citing Akhverdian, *loc. cit. infra*, n. 118, refers to two sons and two daughters, but there were at least three sons, and no evidence of daughters. Hasrat'yan's ten to eleven years would fit the dates posited below for the births of the eldest and youngest son.

⁹⁶ T p. 20. H p. xxx, assumes Melk'o to be the author of these characters, though there is no graphic reason to suppose them to be in his hand; to Melk'o also Hasrat'yan attributes the ugly 'floral' decoration and large blot on the folio, an assignation one can be sure Ioane would refrain from disputing.

fluent adult Georgian hand under a possibly deliberate misquotation of one of the poet's most famous verses⁹⁷ and what look like Russian scribbles may be the name of another son. The most exercises in Georgian script in the *Tetrak*, seven in number, are by the poet's eldest son Melik'set', who signs himself as 'your son' or 'your pupil' *Melk'o*.⁹⁸ Since these might be guessed as being in the hand of a child of seven or eight, the earliest date for his birth would be seven or eight years prior to the copying of the *Tetrak* in 1765, thus ca. 1757/8. Luckily, the one firm set of dates that we possess are relevant to those of Melik'set', since he is known to have been the father of Movsês, who, like for a time his grandfather, was a *k'ahanay* or married priest, who lived from 1810 to 1883 and was in 1844 director of the printing and publishing section of the wellknown Armenian Nersisyan College in Tiflis.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know how old Melik'set' was when he fathered Movsês in 1810, but the age of 52 or 53 is possible. A biologically more usual age of 20 or 30 is out of the question, since that would place Melik'set''s birth at ca. 1880 or 1890, when Sayat'-Nova had been a widowed celibate monk, on any reckoning, for many years. If, anticipating its acceptance below, 1712 was the probable date of the poet's birth, Sayat'-Nova would have fathered Melik'set' in, say, 1758, ten years before Marmar's death in 1768, at forty-six years of age, and at the birth of Ioane ca. 1768 (which would suggest that Marmar died during or shortly after giving birth to him), fifty-six. Late paternity, and certainly longevity, seem to have run in the family. There may be some indication

⁹⁷ T p. 66: *Ashkharhum akh ch'im k'ashi k'ani vur khagh im indz* 'In this world I sigh no sigh as long as my song to me' [...], for ... *k'ani vur jan is indz ama* 'as long as you are life for me', T p. 116, H p. 37.

⁹⁸ *shenis shvilis shenis shvilis melk'oas ket'ilat'* (last five letters in a different hand supplying lacuna caused by broken off corner of folio) 'of your son of your son Melk'o, good', fol. 135; idem, without repetition of *shenis shvilis*, with other exercises, T pp. 70, 137; *shenis dzeis melk'oas* 'of your son Melk'o', T fol. 37; *shenis sh(e)girdi(s) melk'oas oris* [dialectal for *aris*] '(This) is by your pupil Melk'o', T fol. 61; (in more fluent and adult hand) *shenis dzamis (?) melk'oa(s)* 'of your little-brother Melk'o', T p. 36; *K' m(e)lk'o K' bgu (?)* '(In the name of) Christ Melk'o (in the name of) Christ beg (?)', i.e. Melk'o beg, T p. 136.

⁹⁹ H p. xxx. The tombstone of Movsês, who bore the surname of *Sayat'nentz'*, is preserved in the Tiflis Church of the Annunciation, called *Chigrashên*, where he served as *awag k'ahanay* (senior secular priest): *Hangist oskeratz' Movsês Awag K'(a)h(a)n(a)yi Sayat'nentz' 1810-1883* 'This is the resting-place of the bones of the senior priest, Movsês Sayat'nentz', 1810-1883' (cit. P.P. Muradyan, *Armyanskaya èpigrafika Gruzii - Tbilisi*, Ac. Sc. Arm. SSR: Erevan, 1988, p. 84. On the family names *Sayat'-Nova* and *Sayadyan*, see below, p. 70.

of the youngest son's, Ioane's, birth in an inscription in the lower margin of the same folio towards the end of the *Tetrak* upon which, in the right margin Melk'o has, again, written his name.¹⁰⁰ In neat *notrgir* or notary script beginning with a moderately skilful ornithomorph identical with those practised on the previous folio, it is the only example of Armenian script in the *Tetrak* that approaches calligraphy; being situated under two elegant Georgian representations of the poet's name *Arut'ina-m* (ergative case) in the hand of the calligraphic colophonist Pentelant', it could have been written by him, though it is not possible to identify any Armenian script as by him. Although, as one has come to expect in dealing with the elusive persona of Sayat'-Nova, it is far from straightforward (the fifth letter might be otherwise *z* or *sh*), it appears to read *Balaghene*, of which the most feasible interpretation would be Azeri *bäläghänä* 'to his baby'.¹⁰¹ One cannot be sure when this was written, in 1765 or years after, but 1765 would be a possible date for the birth of the youngest son Ioane, making him 58 or 59 in 1823 when he wrote his own version of his father's poems. Of the existence of a fourth child adduced by Hasrat'yan we know otherwise nothing.

An early indication of the difficulties presented by Sayat'-Nova's text and one which is relevant to the facts of his biography, though it gives no date and cannot itself be dated, is afforded by two annotations in the *Tetrak* in a crude Georgian hand and even cruder grammar.

net'i ghmert'ma ter step'anas (m)sh{a}vidobit' moighvanos [probably an Armenian pronunciation of *moiqvanos*] *me es davt'ari tsamikit'khanos me amisi arzi ar darch'es da ch'emi t'avi imas emsakhuros*¹⁰²

'Would that God might bring back Têr Step'an to me in peace so that he might read this notebook for me and so that his request might not remain (unfulfilled) and I myself might be of service to him.'

There is an almost identical note in the same hand on a later folio¹⁰³ beneath a rehearsal of the first eight letters of the Georgian alphabet and

¹⁰⁰ T p. 135.

¹⁰¹ *Balaghana* would be a more expected version of this, the scripts in the *Tetrak* rendering Az *ä* simply as Armenian or Georgian *a*. Az *bäläk* 'swaddling clothes, a child in swaddling clothes' (Äzizbäy).

¹⁰² T p. 24.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 84: *net'i ter step'anam (m)sh{a}vidomit' movides me es tsigni tsamikit'khos t'avis (m)shavilebis* (for *mshvidobis*) *sadgh(e)g(r)dzelos' da ch'emi arzi ar darch'es da ch'emi tz'odvili t'avi imas emsakhuros amin* 'Would that Têr Step'an would come to me in peace and would read this book for me (and so) bring a 'Peace' upon himself and a 'Long Life' and that my request may not remain (unfulfilled) and my sinful self may be of service to him, Amen.'

a crossed through Azeri quotation in Georgian script, *manum baghum bulbul girmaz* 'Into my garden no nightingale enters', which, given the mood of the annotation, may not be irrelevant. In this second note the writer refers to *ch'emi arzi* 'my request', which might be interpreted, however, as 'the request made to me'. One does not know who the writer of these annotations was (his hand is not one of those responsible for the copying of the *Tetrak*), but any request by the former minstrel concerning his poetic *Nachlass* clearly required a reading and understanding of his texts, perhaps with a view to an edition. The word *arzi* (normally in Georgian *arza*) refers strictly to a written request.¹⁰⁴ That the poet was still living when the annotator made it or received it is clear from the 'Long Life!' greeting he would receive upon his return to help mentioned in the later note, apart from the absence of any epithet such as 'the late departed' attached to his name. As the monk Têr Step'anos, however, he was dead to the world, and to the world of poetry in particular.

For at some time prior to these post-1765 notes Sayat'-Nova had become a member of the monastery of Haghpata, the spiritual centre for Armenians 'of the Georgian House', where, if there is any truth behind two verses purporting to be survivors from a 'last poem', he had the function of sacristan (*lusarar* "lamp-lighter"), a lowly office (though in St. James, Jerusalem, the Grand Sacristan (*Awag Lusarar*) may have the rôle of vice-patriarch):

*Haghpata lusarar Sayat'-Noven im.
Me kant'ighës varelû dzet' ch'unim.*¹⁰⁵

'I am the sacristan Sayat'-Nova.
I have no oil to light my lamp'

This does not ring true as a genuine couplet by Sayat'-Nova, however. It is metrically irregular, the first verse having an expected eleven syllables, the second, vocalise it as one will, only ten. Sayat'-Nova had a sense of humour, but it is recorded only as directed against someone else, e.g. in his Georgian lampoon of the Catholicos Anton. As a poet he

¹⁰⁴ *arza* 'Bittschrift' (Tschenkeli). The annotator uses the Persian form *'arzi* 'petition, memorial, humble representation' (Steingass), it (and the stricter Arabic form *APT 'arzi*) suggesting a petition made to a superior, as a T *rikâb-i 'arzihâl* to the Sultan. The word may be used merely in the sense of Az *arzu* 'wish, desire, dream' (Äzizbây).

¹⁰⁵ H pp. xxxiii-xxxiv. A lowly office may well be a privilege: it is not unknown in present-day medieval institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge for the Gardens Fellow to be the college's most renowned scholar (*ave* Sir Harold!).

always took himself very seriously. He could have become ruefully more self-critical with time, but the couplet, if at all genuine, sounds like a parody directed at the former minstrel by a fellow monk.

The above account is all one knows for sure about the life of Sayat'-Nova apart from the vital fact of his poetry and what of biographical interest may be deduced from it. It is at least founded upon manuscript evidence, and though one should treat with caution much of what is written by our fellow men, black on white is of all testimony the most impressive.

It would have been a pleasure to have been able to begin at the beginning and end at the end, but the fact is that we do not know for sure when the poet was born, or when he died exactly.

The Georgian scholar Alexandr Baramidze, writing in 1963, placed the date of Sayat'-Nova's birth in '1712 or 1722', with no explanation for the ten-year difference.¹⁰⁶ The poet's first editor, Gevorg Akhverdian placed it in 1712:¹⁰⁷ since he wrote in 1852, himself born presumably (I do not know his dates) a couple of decades after the death of the poet at the most, within the lifetime of the poet's youngest son Ioane, and borrowed the *Tetrak* from his grandson Têr Movsês in 1848¹⁰⁸, his date can claim right of seniority. The bicentenary of the poet's birth was celebrated at Tiflis, with the participation of his great admirer, the poet Hovhannes T'umanyan, in 1913,¹⁰⁹ and the 250th anniversary of his birth in Erevan in 1963. A photograph taken on the Feast of the Transfiguration (the Armenian name of which, *Vardatôn* 'Rose Festival', suggests a relevance to one of the poet's main themes) on 12th May 1963 at the Church of St. George in Tiflis in front of his memorial plaque, which bears only the traditional date of his death, 1795, shows his editor and translator Morus Hasrat'yan in the company of two of Sayat'-Nova's great-great-grandchildren, whose presumed dates suggest the late births in the family referred to above.¹¹⁰ Since Hasrat'yan favoured 1712 as the

¹⁰⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ *Cit. H* p. x.

¹⁰⁸ Hasrat'yan, p. xxvi. Movsês subsequently retrieved it back into the family.

¹⁰⁹ Y. T'umanyan, *Sayat'-Nova*, ed. R. Zaryan, Erevan, 1945 (thitherto unpublished lecture delivered in Tiflis, 5th December 1913 O.S.).

¹¹⁰ Reproduced apud Hasrat'yan, facing p. 128. Anna and Harut'yun Sayat'-Nova, who appear to be in their 70's, are there so entitled (*t'orân t'orner* 'grandchildren of the grandson'), thus born ca. 1893, which is chronologically unexceptionable, except that it means that on an average they would have been born when their father was ca. 40, who would

date of the poet's birth, the 1713 date of the celebrations can be due only to Soviet planning: there is nothing to support a date of 1713.

A date of 1712 for the poet's birth could be justified by the collation of two facts: his earliest recorded poem that bears a date bears one equivalent to A.D. 1742,¹¹¹ and in an annotation to one of his Armenian poems he intimates, as we have seen,¹¹² that thirty was the age of his maturity as a minstrel. The suspicion, and it is a strong one, arises, that it is precisely upon the simple arithmetic that this provokes, perhaps first in Akhverdian, perhaps earlier, that the date of 1712 has been arrived at, and become fairly firmly entrenched. Nevertheless, it is plausible. One can be sure, owing to the exact dating of his final poems of protest and despair, that 1759 was the date of his dismissal as court minstrel. In 1760/1 we know he was a married priest at Anzal on the Caspian coast. In 1765/6 (1215 Arm.) he copied an Armenian manuscript further inland at Kakho Karvansaray, still as a married priest. Some time later, perhaps in 1772, he became a monk at Haghpat, which he could do only after the death of his wife Marmar in 1768.

When did Sayat'-Nova marry Marmar? We have calculated above that the eldest son Melik'set' was born at the earliest in 1757/8. His father's poems dated 1758 show him subject to severe anxiety. The premisses upon which we have calculated Melik'set''s date of birth would not invalidate 1759 as the year of the poet's dismissal from court. Should one subscribe to the widespread view that Sayat'-Nova owed his downfall, for which he takes the blame upon himself, that he had become involved in a scandal of a romantic nature, a strong possibility to be discussed in the next chapter, the suspicion arises that he was forced into marriage, as well as into holy orders of the kind for which marriage was essential, those of a *k'ahanay*. It is, of course, possible that Sayat'-Nova had been married to Marmar for a number of years prior to his dismissal from court, which would have made any

have been born when his father, their grandfather, was also ca. 40. The relationship is confirmed by a photograph of the same year and place reproduced in the monthly magazine *Sovetakan Hayastan*, no. 9, Erevan, September 1963 (a number devoted mainly to the poet's 250th anniversary), p. 26, where Anna is similarly named as the grand-daughter of the grandson (*tsoṛnadustr*), i.e. Sayat'-Nova's great-great-grand-daughter. Although it is of no direct relevance to Sayat'-Nova's own complicated chronology, a family-tree of his descendants, based on church records and birth certificates, etc., would be of great interest.

¹¹¹ Above, p. 21.

¹¹² Above, p. 13.

romantic misdemeanour all the worse — and imply that his children were older than above posited, which the possible chronological parameters will stand. It is because of this possibility that some Armenian scholars have mooted that Sayat'-Nova may have been married, and widowed, twice, making any romantic attachment in between and outside marriage acceptable, Hasrat'yan deeming it useful to propose that 'a (widowed) layman of 35-45 years old, with a family, could fall heavily in love, above all since at that time a love marriage was the exception'.¹¹³ Relevant is an appeal to the verse in the Georgian poem *Samart'ali miqav* 'Give me justice' to the effect that

*ar mqavs meughle, artz'a mdzakhali*¹¹⁴

'I have no spouse, I have no in-laws'

This poem, an appeal for justice to the king, is dated by some at 1752, a supposed first rift in the poet's relations with the Georgian court, seven years before the second and final one of 1759.¹¹⁵ But the statement could well relate to 1759. What is forgotten in the hypothesis of two marriages is that digamy was forbidden to priests by the canons of the Armenian Orthodox Church. The affairs of Heaven were not to be complicated. Only one wife could await her widowed husband in the next world, and in Sayat'-Nova's case, that was Marmar. She is at all events the only one referred to and named, and nothing of chronological importance is to be gained by positing another. Nor is there any point in doubting the identity of her eldest son Melik'set' with the Melk'o (a hypocoristic form of Melik'set') who peppered his name so liberally over his father's book of verses. Hasrat'yan places Melk'o's birth at ca. 1747-8, which would mean that he would have been 57 or 58 at the time of his son Movsês's birth in 1810,¹¹⁶ which is possible but not probable. 1765/6, the date of its composition, is the earliest date possible for his scribbles in the *Tetrak*, i.e. when on Hasrat'yan's reckoning he would have been at least 17; even if he had so misused it immediately upon its composition, which is unlikely, such a liberty, like the childish script itself, befits, as we have said above, more a child of seven or eight than a youth of 17, placing his birth at the earliest, since his exercises were made on a manuscript dated 1765, at 1757. At all events, he must still have been

¹¹³ H p. xxx.

¹¹⁴ Ioane, fol. 17r; ed. B p. 19; cf. H p. xxxiii.

¹¹⁵ B p. 96; H pp. xxvii-xxviii.

¹¹⁶ H p. xxx.

living with his father, a married priest, at the time, since he constantly refers to himself as 'thy son' (*sheni shvili*, etc.). This formula, rather than 'your son' (*t'k'veni shvili*) could suggest that his mother was already dead, i.e. after 1768. The early 1770's would be an acceptable date for the poet's retreat to the monastery. His youngest son Ioane, born ca. 1768, would then still be an infant, a heavy responsibility for a widower. Ioane's annotations to his copy of his father's poems in 1823, a great service to his memory, as Crown Prince T'eimurazi puts it, shows that there was no filial rejection. Was there perhaps an aunt who could look after the children? Or their grandparents? There are a few *silentia* that might count as *testimonia*. In his colophon of 1765/6 he asks for no prayers to be said for any brothers or sisters, perhaps therefore no aunts or uncles on his side for his children, though there may have been on his late wife's side. His parents could well still have been living in 1765/6, in their 70's perhaps, and his wife's parents. In asking for prayers for his parents, the poet-scribe does not refer to them as 'late', (*i Têr*) *hangutz'eal* 'gone to rest unto the Lord', as most colophonists would have done in referring to departed parents. He has left little space for his colophon on fol. 100v of MS no. 4270, which ends abruptly *ew ayl am(enetz'un) ayreantz' me(rdzaworatz'?)*¹¹⁷ 'and for all other blood re(lations)', and thus does not specify 'living and departed', as was usual. But it was also usual to ask for prayers for a late wife, and his omission to do so means that we must treat his silences with reserve. One can, however, safely assume that he did his best for his children. His poetry is full of moral and pious precepts, and 18th-century Georgia was in any case not like France of the same epoch, where the author of *Emile ou De l'Education* could consign his children to the orphanage. According to one account, his death was connected with concern for his children's safety. On hearing of Agha Mahmad Khan's approach on Georgia, he is said to have brought his children to Mozdok, a Russian fortified settlement on the Terek,¹¹⁸ thus placing them under Russian

¹¹⁷ The preface to the *Tetrak* facsimile reads *me(rotz')* 'our' ('all our blood'), but *arean merdzawork'* is usual (see NBHL, s.v. *merdzawor*).

¹¹⁸ Akhverdyan, *cit.* H. Peterman, 'Über den Dialekt der Armenier von Tiflis', *Abh.d. K. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin* 1866, p. 63. The town was a Cossack centre, and still plays an imperial rôle as a place of detention (*The Times* of 31.1.95 reports rumours of torture) for Chechen fighters for independence, their principal sin being to lie on the major oil pipeline between Baku and Rostov. It was subject to attack from neighbouring Circassians, e.g. in 1767 (Baddeley, *The Russian conquest of the Caucasus*, p. 33), but by 1784 Potemkin had joined it by a string of blockhouses to his unambiguously named new

protection, before returning to Tiflis and martyrdom. Since his youngest son Ioane must have been born at the latest within a year of his mother's death in 1768, he would have been a man of ca. 27 in 1795, hardly, one would think, a child in need of close parental protection. But it is possible that Sayat'-Nova had a special relationship with the Russians which he sought to exploit.

1712 is thus an acceptable date for Sayat'-Nova's birth, though to make him ten years younger in positing 1722 would do no great violence to the 'laws' of probability. With regard to *testimonia ex silentio* just mentioned, Hasrat'yan remarks, concerning the date of the death of the poet to which we now come, and which has relevance also for the date of his birth, that when Akhverdian proposed 1795 in his work of 1852, none of his sons or grandsons expressed any objection.¹¹⁹ Whether Melik'set', who would then have been ca. 90, or Ioane, ca. 83, were living in 1852 or not — probably not, or Akhverdian would surely have mentioned at least Ioane as living — his grandson Movsês (1810-1883) was. But he said nothing that is recorded, and passed nothing to his children and his (in 1963) surviving grandchildren that has been recorded, though Hasrat'yan, who knew them, having been photographed with them,¹²⁰ must have enquired in the course of his investigations into the poet's biography. Ioane, who mentions several dates in his manuscript concerning the poems, does not give any for the birth or the death of his father. If there are any genes governing articulacy, Sayat'-Nova, who had received them in abundance, did not pass them on.

The large (approximately five foot tall) black marble plaque beside the porch of the Fortress Church of St. George overlooking the city of Tiflis from the south records the date of his death as 1795, together with his most famous quatrain ('Not everyone can drink of my water...'). It makes no reference to the date of his birth, but the date of its unveiling, 15th May 1914, suggests an approximation to his bicentenary. The plaque was commissioned by the Armenian writers of Tiflis, led by Hovhannes T'umanyan and G. Bashinjaghyan, with the participation of Georgian writers, schoolchildren and, says Hasrat'yan, 'the whole Tiflis community', each wearing a red rose 'as a symbol of the singer of love'.¹²¹

foundation Vladikavkas (Allen, p. 199). In 1795 the passage between Tiflis and Mozdok prior to Mahmad's surprise incursion from the south would have been easy.

¹¹⁹ H p. xxxvi.

¹²⁰ H facing p. 128.

¹²¹ H p. xxxviii.

Another commemoration took place on 12th May 1963, the Feast of the Transfiguration, called in Armenian *Vardavar* or *Vardatôn*, the 'Feast of Roses', complementary reason for the roses that decorated the large portrait of the poet on that occasion. The poet's descendants, seen before this memorial on the photograph mentioned above, are not recorded as expressing any objection to 1795 as the date of his death, which we owe to Akhverdyan, and which remained unchallenged until the 1930's (and then on no firm evidence), as we shall see below. The date relates to the tradition, related to Akhverdyan by people who claimed to have been at the poet's burial,¹²² that the poet was killed at the church on 11th/22nd September by the troops of the Persian tyrant Agha Mahmad Khan Kajar during his sack of the city after his defeat of Irakli's army. If this is so, it will surprise no-one, and it would not be for the last time, that the Prophet's injunction to spare the People of the Book was forgotten or ignored. It is possible, however, that Agha Mahmad felt justified by the Qur'anic command not to treat as friends those who had thrown Muslims out, or helped to throw them out, of their houses (*min diyârihim*),¹²³ whereby his campaign might assume the nature of a *jihâd* or holy war, in which anything goes. For he, it is said, 'used to observe that he had no title even to the name of king till he was obeyed throughout the whole of the limits of the Empire of Persia', and had he not offered

¹²² H p. xxxvi (read 1848-1851 for 1748-1751).

¹²³ 'Those (Muslims) who have believed and the Jews and the Sabæans and the Nazarenes (and) whoever has believed in God and the New Day and has done good, no fear shall come upon them and they shall have no sorrow (*fa-lâ khawf^m ʿalayhim wa-lâ yahzanûna*)', *Qur'an*, 5,73; see below, Chapter Eight, p. 358. 'God does not forbid you with respect to those who do not combat you in matters of the Faith and do not eject you from your homes to treat them kindly (*tabarrâhum*) and act justly (*tuqsiṭû*) with them, (for) verily God loves those who act justly. (But) verily God forbids you with respect to those who have combatted you in matters of the Faith and have ejected you from your homes and have helped in your expulsion to take them as friends (*tawallawhum*) and whoever takes them for a friend, they also shall be (counted) as wicked', *Qur'an*, 60, 8,9. Treatment of the People of the Book was intended to be different from that of the *Kufr* or heathen, who were literally to get it in the neck (*darba-r-riqâbi*), Q. 47,4. The Prophet ('he who speaks for God') was a merciful man. His conciliatory attitude towards the Jews and Christians, however, seen in particular in *Sura* 2, is perhaps largely due to the fact that his religion was in its infancy: spiritually, he owed much to the believers in the Old and New Testaments, and practically, the affairs of his world at that time were in their hands. Power corrupts. When Islam was in the saddle, attitudes changed — and the followers of the Prince of Peace cannot throw stones. Armenians remember that when their country was taken over by the Arabs in the 7th century, the ironically named 'Abdu'r-Rahmân 'Servant of the Most-Merciful' burned Christians alive in their Churches.

Irakli extensive suzerainty in the Caucasus if he would break his Russian alliance and restore Georgia to Persia?¹²⁴ At all events, summoned to convert to Islam or die, the old monk is reported to have replied in an Azeri couplet, not quite regular,

ch'ikhmanam kilisädän
*dönmänäm Isadan*¹²⁵

'I shall not leave the Church,
I shall not turn away from Jesus.'

The *vardapet* Yovhannês Ghrimetz'i related that when the vanguard of the Persian army penetrated Tiflis, 'they slaughtered the vardapets of Haghpät who had hidden in the citadel church', i.e. those who together with the whole village of Haghpät fled from the invading forces from the south to take refuge in the (inadequately) fortified capital.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, no mention is made of Sayat'-Nova's martyrdom. The minstrel Shamch'i Melk'o (b. ca. 1760-5), who fought heroically in defence of Tiflis and claimed the lives of 'four qizilbash and one khan', records only that 'they slaughtered vardapets, (whose) corpses were brought to a (secular) priest' (*vardapetner kotoretz'in, lesher êr atsats terteri*).¹²⁷ Accordingly, Sayat'-Nova's death as a martyr for the faith in 1795 is rejected by Baramidze as 'a pretty legend' (*lamazi legenda*),¹²⁸ following the works of Platon Ioseliani (1895), G. Leonidze (1930), and L. Melik'set'-Bek (1930),¹²⁹ who, basing their views on 'Georgian sources', held that Sayat'-Nova died in his bed in 1801. Western readers should here show a little understanding, and not demand to see a photograph of a death certificate. The Georgian sources are not of

¹²⁴ Malcolm, *History of Persia*, II, pp. 300-302, *cit. et comm.* Allen, p. 213. Like his predecessor Nadir Shâh, Agha Mahmud was not proclaimed Shâh until after his reconquest of Georgia, in 1796, Allen *ibid.*, n. 2.

¹²⁵ H p. xxxiv; *cit.* also by H. Peterman, *loc. cit.*, where, however, the Azeri is erroneously transcribed into Ottoman Turkish (and one of the singularities of this otherwise good work which, however, takes the Armenian of Sayat'-Nova to be typical, is the failure to mention one of the major features of Tiflis Armenian, its ejective Georgian-style stops).

¹²⁶ H p. xxxvii.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ P. 104.

¹²⁹ P. Ioseliani, *Tz'khovreba Giorgi Metz'amet'isa* [The life of Giorgi XIII], Tbilisi, 1895, p. 320; G. Leonidze, *Mgosani Saat'nova* [The minstrel Sayat'nova], T., 1930; L. Melik'set'-Bek, *Saiat'nova*, T., 1930; quoted by P.M. Muradyan, *Sayat'-Novan êst vrazt'akan aghbyurneri* [S.N. according to Georgian sources], Erevan, 1963, pp. 16-19.

such a nature. They consist in an account by the Georgian deacon Ioan Khelashvili, monk in the Kvabt'akhevi monastery in K'art'li, of a meeting with Sayat'-Nova at Haghpat, assumed to be in 1800,¹³⁰ which permits a date of 1801 to be posited as that of his death, though why one should not be generous, and posit 1807, thus giving the old poet the 95 years he anticipated in his Azeri autobiographical poem, which is just as sound, is unknown. It would be presumptuous to suggest to scholars who accept this account as genuine that clerics have not been entirely inactive in the realm of fiction, and one's quill trembles in venturing to mention Dean Swift and his *Gulliver's Travels*. But Tiflis did not cease to be a centre of mythopoeia in the 13th century with Rust'aveli: the tradition was continued by Friedrich Bodenstedt in 1850 with his invention of the poet 'Mirza Schaffi', whose Westöstlicher Diwan type verses were convincing enough to some to encourage an Azeri retroversion of the works of this national poet in Baku. Khelashvili's professed aim of 'teaching through jest' (*khumarstsavla*)¹³¹ has an ominous sound where sober truth is required. The *Kalmasoba* was not intended as a work of fiction, and it includes many items of Armenian historical interest, concerning Armenian writers in Georgia, the antiquities of Gugark', the see of Ejmiatsin, etc.¹³² Khelashvili, born in 1722, dying in 1837, enjoying, in the words of M.-F. Brosset, the most eminent Georgian specialist speaking in St. Petersburg in 1838, 'une grande réputation de science et de sainteté'.¹³³ He is credited with forty-two-works, including a Georgian dictionary, though nothing, apart from his contributions to the *Kalmasoba*, has been published. The title-page of the book as we now have it, Prince Ioann's original title-page being lost, refers to the journey for the collection of supplies undertaken by the sub-deacon (*mtz'ire*) Ioan Khelashvili, a

¹³⁰ The account is given in the *Kalmasoba* ('Gleanings', i.e. corn collected at threshing time as a contribution to churches and monasteries', Tschenkeli) composed by Prince Ioane Batonishvili (1772-1836) between 1813 and 1828 in St. Petersburg. It was edited, with abridgments, by K. Kekelidze and A. Baramidze in two volumes, Tiflis, 1936, from which the quotations here are taken (vol. I, pp. 226-229). An even more abridged Russian translation was published by V. Dondua, Tiflis, 1945, which D.M. Lang used as the basis for his article on the historical background of the *Kalmasoba*, 'Prince Ioann and his "Kalmasoba"', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 11 (1952), pp. 274-287.

¹³¹ Lang, *art. cit.*, p. 278, n. 16.

¹³² Muradyan, pp. 90-91.

¹³³ *Discours prononcé à l'Académie des Sciences, le 10 janvier 1838*, apud Laurent Brosset, *Bibliographie analytique des ouvrages de Monsieur M.-F. Brosset*, St. Petersburg, 1887, p. 116; *cit. Lang, art. cit.*, p. 280, n. 22, with other useful refs.

native of the village of Vak'iri in K'siqi, who became a monk in the monastery of K'vabt'akhevi under the abbot Dosit'eos P'itskhelauri. He was educated at the T'elavi seminary under the rector David Alek'sid as a school-fellow of Prince Ioann. As to his contribution to the *Kalmasoba*, a letter of 4th/16th September 1825, says that the Crown Prince Ioann has been composing over the past twelve years a tome as thick as the Bible, and had put his, Iona's, name to it calling upon him to expound all branches of knowledge, ecclesiastical and secular.¹³⁴ This initial subterfuge makes one tremble for the cause of truth. 'Il faut enjoliver la vérité' is the motto of the good raconteur, but not of the sound historian. The pages of the *Kalmasoba* are full of humorous incidents, a cat-beating headmaster, a priest who does not know the Lord's Prayer, a Chief Scribe who cannot read or write; and a monk who at the time of his consecration hid the strings of his saz in his cassock so that they should be blessed along with himself, i.e. Sayat'-Nova. Real personage or not, one cannot avoid the suspicion that Khelashvili was used as a literary cat's-paw by Prince Ioann to illustrate what was wrong with the Georgian society of his day, and that the account of his travels in search of supplies for his monastery was a convenient peg upon which to hang many a good idea. Khelashvili, although a letter of his records that in his youth he travelled widely through Kakhet'i, K'art'li, and Somkhet'i (Armenia), nowhere else, outside the *Kalmasoba* where he is represented as speaking of himself in the third person, claims that he undertook a journey for the collection of alms, and no-one else mentions it either. 'It is not established that he ever undertook a journey for the collection of alms in kind for a monastery', declares D.M. Lang.¹³⁵ In the meeting related in the *Kalmasoba* as taking place between himself, in the rôle of an optimistic young celibate monk in his 20's and the disillusioned old father in his 80's who had spent most of his life with wine, women and song, and still missed it, permits the former to pontificate that 'it is better for a man to grow accustomed to virtue while still young, since if you had been made a monk in your youth, you would not now be a prey to melancholy'. This has a certain ring of truth about it, since it is the style of Junior Fellows everywhere. Ioane declares that of course he has heard of the old monk's 'high praise in the world of minstrelsy and entertainment (*kef*).' He had probably heard also the poet's *She satsqalo ch'emo*

¹³⁴ *Cit.* D. Karichashvili, 'Vin aris Kalmasobis avtori' [Who is the author of the *Kalmasoba*], *Sak'art'velos ark'ivi*, II, 187, *cit.* Lang, p. 280.

¹³⁵ *Art. cit.*, p. 279.

t'avo 'O my unhappy head', though the version he claims to have been recited on this occasion is defective in having only four stanzas instead of the expected five recorded elsewhere, and has one verse of 13 syllables in place of the expected 11: *vgoneb ch'emis ubeduris, dghisagan ari* (v. 23) 'I think it comes from my unlucky day'.¹³⁶ It is possible that the old poet's memory failed him after a good meal and fine wine, but it is more likely that Khelashvili had the poem from another source. I would not follow Baramidze in considering it the preferred version.¹³⁷ There is a graver objection to Khelashvili's claimed transcription of Sayat'-Nova's conversation. Why should the poet, in reply to Khelashvili's question as to his identity, say that he was *Saat'lama*? In T'eimurazi Batonishvili's 1823 catalogue the poet is called *Saadnama* and *Savat'nama*, and *Saat'nama*- is the form T'eimurazi uses in the note he wrote on fol. 1v of Ioane's 1823 manuscript.¹³⁸ This is a peculiarly Georgian error, which Khelashvili could have picked up somewhere, but could hardly have heard from the poet's own lips, since he used the form *Sayat' Nova* or *Saiat'nova* in the text of all his Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri poems.

It is not clear when Khelashvili is supposed to have visited Sayat'-Nova at Haghpāt. Most, like Hasrat'yan, assume 1800.¹³⁹ Muradyan calculates that it must have been made some time after 1798,¹⁴⁰ since Khelashvili in the course of his account of his conversation with the abbot of Sanahin/Haghpāt Solomon Arghut'ashvili Mkhargrdzeli he mentions that his family had been pardoned for its opposition to the Georgian throne by Irakli (II) and Giorgi (XIII).¹⁴¹ Since the latter ascended the throne on the former's death in 1798, any mention of him as king means that Khelashvili's visit must have taken place after 1798. But when why, in expressing his admiration of the fortress-like structure of Sanahin and the massive masonry of Haghpāt, to the extent of wondering why temporal rulers had not thought of building fortifications 'impregnable to invaders' to protect their subjects as well as themselves,¹⁴² does he not

¹³⁶ *Kalmasoba*, ed. cit., p. 226. Baramidze's edition, which gives Khelashvili's version pride of place (pp. 23-4) over Grishashvili's (pp. 76-77, see note, p. 91), omits *ch'emis* 'my', noting that it is added by the 'original' (*dedani*).

¹³⁷ See below, p. 120.

¹³⁸ See above, p. 15.

¹³⁹ H p. xxxvii.

¹⁴⁰ Muradyan, pp. 91-2.

¹⁴¹ *Kalmasoba*, ed. cit., p. 223.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

remember that the whole monastery and village of Haghpāt had fled to Tiflis to escape from Agha Mahmad's army? But one would be unwise to trust any chronology based upon Khelashvili. His letter of 1825 quoted above referring to his contribution to Prince Ioann's *Kalmasoba* begun twelve years earlier shows that his account of his meeting with the poet was made at the earliest in 1813, many years, on any reckoning, after Sayat'-Nova's death. Thus it is in no way surprising that he introduced an anachronism in his account in mentioning Giorgi XIII in connection with Solomon. He could well have visited him, and Sayat'-Nova, before Agha Mahmad's invasion of 1795, when he, born in 1722, would have been 23. Since he is represented as a novice, precociously critical of his elders, the age of, say, 18 would have been credible, making 1790 a possible date of his visit to Sayat'-Nova — if, indeed, it ever took place at all. Giorgi's son Ioann must have known all about Sayat'-Nova. It would not have required a great feat of the imagination to invent a visit by his collaborator Khelashvili, whose account, like much in the *Kalmasoba*, has a distinct aura of romance about it. It certainly does not begin convincingly:

'Then a monk from among the Armenians put his cell at the disposition of Ioan and he (Ioan) went there. And when the vart'apet let Ioan into his cell, he greeted him, and enquired after the purpose of his visit. Ioan gave him a complete account, and then they sat down, chatted a little, and the vart'apet offered Ioan a snack (*sauzme*, possibly 'breakfast'), and they began to eat. And herewith he served Ioan a good wine and poured out a goodly drop for himself, too. Then the vart'apet took down a *ch'onguri* and began to play it, and then produced this song:

[There follows Ioan's version of *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head']

The deacon Ioan watched with amazement, and said, 'Alas for the unhappy man! How he bewails abandoning the status of man of the world [i.e. the secular state].' Finally he said, 'Father, you are a monk, you have not gone astray?! [lit. gone to the left].

Vart'apet: When I was your age, sometimes I went to the left, sometimes to the right.

Ioan: Unhappy me! For that you weep?

Vart'apet: For that I weep, and for you, too, that you, a lad of such tender years, should have become a monk.

Ioan: It is better for a man to become accustomed to good while still of tender years. If you had become a monk when young, you would not now be prey to such melancholy.

Vart'apet: If my spiritual-leader (*modzghvari*) would release me, I should prefer the secular state to this monkhood!

Ioan: Permit me to ask, who are you?

Vart'apet: Allow me to introduce myself, I am the sinful Saat'lama, if you have heard of him.

Ioan: Of course I heard of your fame in minstrelsy (*sazandaroba*) and entertainment (*shek'tz'eva*). Permit me, who were you (exactly)?

Saat'lama: I could play the *ch'onguri* well, and along with that I composed Georgian poems on Persian themes [*khmebi*, otherwise 'modes']. I was not yet accepted [recognised as a worthy performer?], and when King Irakli attended the assembly, and they brought on us musicians (*mosakrave*), then I sang in Georgian on Persian themes. The King was pleased, and presented me, too, with a robe-of-honour (*khalat*). And then many others sang (in like fashion) and imitated me. I was admitted [*lit.* had a place] everywhere, not only as a singer [*lit.* for songs], but as a jester [*lit.* for jesting, *khumroba*], and in village do's (*sak'me-*), that I should engage in a lot (of various functions). Then I opted to become a monk, and here I am — and this I recited here in my monkhood in verse, as a song, you will mark.

Ioan: Since you have left the world, will you still engage in music and singing?

Saat'lama: My spiritual director (*tsinamdzhvari*) commanded me (to give it up), and I made this condition: that as long as these strings were strung on my *ch'onguri* and did not break, I would not take my hand from them, since when they blessed me (in consecrating me) as a monk, these strings were kept in my breast-pocket, and so were blessed along with me. And (so) I play (my) tunes (*khma*) on these blest strings.

Ioan: And as long as you keep to your word, they will grant you permission.

And with this jest, they finished their meal.

Saat'lama: I shall surely be saved, since this church of ours has forty chapels, and when one of us departs (the world of the living), they say a mass for him in every one of them for forty days, ten masses

a day for forty days. And it is said, that if someone says a mass for his departed ten times a day for forty days, he shall be saved without any doubt, if it is in his last hour, (and) he confesses (his sins) and takes Holy Communion.¹⁴³

One must remark that it is rare that strings on a stringed instrument last for more than twenty years, though, entering into the fun, one could imagine that the poet concealed quite a bundle of them in his breast-pocket at the time of his consecration. What rings, one must say disconcertingly, true, is the arithmetical joke, put in as an afterthought obviously. (It must be a joke, since there is no time for 400 masses if your last hour has come, even if you do confess and commune — and it could in any case be approaching blasphemy to suppose the Creator bound by such nonsense.) In the colophon of the MS he copied as Têr Step'anos in 1765/6, the former poet reveals a mind occupied with petty calendrical calculations, of which Khelashvili was unlikely to be aware.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ *Kalmasoba*, ed. cit. supra (note 119), pp. 226-7. Muradyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95, gives an Armenian translation.

¹⁴⁴ Reproduced in the Appendix to the facsimile of the *Tetrak* quoted above, fol. 276v: T'vin hayotz' i.m.zh.e. gir tarwoyn tz'o-n ê. tanutêrn Aytseghjiwrn ê. Isk khetz'getinn ew karichn ew dzukn nahanjen. erb gir tarwoyn i notz'a kargn hasanis i marti amisn. t'ê K'ê ê du P'iwrn banetz'oy. ew t'ê P'iwr ê du Zhiwnn ayspês minch'ew tz'Aypn. I tarwojn A gir yajaj tur ew t'iw mi aweli kal zt'uakann ew ughigh gas 'In the Armenian year 1215. The annual letter is Tz' [33rd letter of the Armenian alphabet], the ruler of the house [dominant constellation] Capricorn. And Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces are in recession. When the annual letter(s are) in their order, you arrive [with each] in the month of March. If it is K' [36th letter], work with P' [35th letter], and if it is P', you [use] W [34th letter], similarly up to [back to] A [first letter]. In the year bring [lit. give] forward the letter A and the figure One more to get [kal] the date and you come right...' Although SN does not say so in so many words, this refers to the method of calculating the date of Easter with reference to the vernal equinox of 21st March by the use of the *taregir* or 'annual letter' and a *pons asinorum* to ensure that ordinal are not confused with cardinal numbers. For example, if the annual letter is B '2', one must not add 2 to 21 and get the Armenian equivalent of 23rd March, since B indicates the second day after the 21st, i.e. 22nd March: therefore one must add to 21 the figure 2 - 1 = 1, and get the correct 22nd March. Concerning the constellations mentioned, Professor John North of the University of Groningen writes (letter 1st November 1990), that at the beginning of the Armenian year 1215 'the Sun is within a few hours of entering Libra... If the year was taken to begin at daybreak the head of Capricorn would have been in mid-heaven, i.e. on the meridian at the year's beginning. Cancer would have been at lower-mid-heaven and Pisces would have been setting — both unfavourable. I do not see why Scorpio was out of sorts ... I have a hunch (no more) that the writer is all at sea, and is reproducing the only bits of theory that he can remember, but without understanding what he is saying.'

With Khelashvili claiming to teach through jest, however, and with Sayat'-Nova's occasional rôle as a professional jester, how is one to know who is the joker in this particular pack? But then, most packs have two, which injects a further element of uncertainty into an already uncertain field.

It is possible that a reference is made to the death of Sayat'-Nova as by the hands of Agha Mahmad Khan by his younger son Ioane in what would nevertheless be an incongruous and anachronistic note in Georgian in his 1823 manuscript to an Armenian love poem composed surely many years before, prior to his retirement as a minstrel in 1759. The poem, *Khavar gēnatz' bēbuli mod, vart'ēn k'u galun mēnum ê* 'News reached the Nightingale, the Rose awaits your coming', is in the Persian tradition. The Rose refers to the death of Ferhad, after which Shirin seeks release by the dagger. The Nightingale in the final verses prays

Tēr, pahe vart'i nēmanēn.

Ashkharumēs k'ani sagh is, Sayat'-Novi gerezmanēn

Shah-Abasi lali nēman, shahi vren galun mēnum ê.

'... Lord, preserve the like of the Rose.

As long as you are well in this world, the grave of Sayat'-Nova,

Like that of the minister of Shah-Abbas, awaits the coming of the King.'

On fol. 69A of his manuscript Ioane adds the following note, calling the poem a *mukhammas*, though it is composed of four stanzas (though possibly one is now missing) of quatrains:¹⁴⁵

*Ese mukhamazia saiadnovam ip'ik'ra roma qaeni unda imisi sap'lavzed
movides didis qizhinit' mist'vis lukma lukmat' dakutsos dzali visatz'
katz'oba ekhmarat' imis t'ana vazhi katz'is sikvdili*

This text has caused commentators much trouble, Hasrat'yan referring to it as in 'a very incomprehensible and confused style' (p. 250). He has unfortunately added to the confusion by suggesting a reading *guli* 'heart' for *dzali* 'power': though the initial *dz-* is open and could be confused with *g-*, the *-a-* is clearly no *-u-*. Hasrat'yan's Armenian translation is syntactically as unclear as the Georgian original. Melik'set'-Bek's interpretation (*Patmabanasirakan Handes*, 1963, no. 3, p. 28) attempts

Sayat'-Nova, who dates his poems always according to the Georgian chronicon in which the year begins with 1st January, must have had difficulty when required to date the manuscripts he copied according to the mobile Greater Armenian Era current in the Armenian Church, and the above colophon reflects his attempts to come to terms with a system strange to him.

¹⁴⁵ On this poem, see below, Chapter Nine, p. 383.

to supply the syntactic lacunae: 'This is a mukhambaz [*sic*, for mukhamaz]. Sayat'-Nova thought that the khan would come to his tomb with a great clamour, to tear him to pieces. (Well - *hapa*), who can apply such force? (Imagine) the death of such a brave man'. Perhaps the following version does less violence to Ioane's text:

'This is a *mukhammas*. Sayat'-Nova has imagined that a Khan would fall upon his grave with a great hullabaloo in order to tear to pieces the power of one who had displayed bravery like him (dying) the death of a hero.'

It would be to the credit of his filial piety that Ioane so described his father's martyrdom at the hands of the Persian Khan 28 years earlier, if such is the case, but certainly no such thought was in Sayat'-Nova's mind at the time of the composition of this fairly traditional poem, in which the Nightingale is saying that he will remain true to the Rose beyond the grave, and prays that she will visit it.

Hasrat'yan has complained that questions as to Sayat'-Nova's dates have exercised scholars to the detriment of other important problems connected with his life and work.¹⁴⁶ With respect to his death, it is not as though Armenia were so lacking in martyrs that she needs to invent another. The scanty evidence makes it a matter of personal choice whether one accepts 1795 or 1801 as the date of the poet's death, a martyrdom of a proud and assertive man, such as we know him to have been, at the age of 83 (or 73), or death by natural causes at the age of 89 (or 79): one is not dealing with a time and place in which registers of births and deaths were common and reliable, and if they existed, as conscientious church records might, much, as Movsês Khorenatz'i already in the 5th (or 8th) century complained, has fallen victim to wars and conflagrations — and, one can now add, revolutions. No doubt much of Sayat'-Nova's poetry has been lost, especially the occasional pieces to which T'eimurazi Batonishvili refers,¹⁴⁷ of which Baramidze includes only two, in Georgian, as one would imagine most of them would have been. We are, however, lucky to have two manuscripts containing his major poems, so lucky indeed, that one is gripped by a cold panic when one thinks that this great poet's work might otherwise be preserved only by a few snatches preserved in the not notably reliable folk memory.

¹⁴⁶ P. x.

¹⁴⁷ See above, pp. 15-16.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POET'S LIFE: CONJECTURES AND MYTHS

In the preceding chapter the account of the poet's life has endeavoured to separate the facts from the fictions. But the gaps in Sayat'-Nova's biography, as indeed the personality that emerges from his poems, give him a mysterious aura, which his own predilection for enigma, allegories and double meanings does nothing to dispel. So he has not remained immune from the attention of those scholars who are always ready to prove that Homer was someone else, and Shakespeare was Bacon or some other.

Two false 'identifications' of Sayat'-Nova with other known personalities may fairly easily be discounted. In 1913 Hovhannes T'umanyan, the important modern Tiflis-Armenian poet and an admirer of his predecessor, pardonably unaware that the latter had recorded his religious name in the Matenadaran MS no. 4270 as *Step'anos*, elaborated a theory that Sayat'-Nova was the Davit' vardapet of Tiflis who became a monk at Haghpats in 1771, was at the request of the Georgian Crown Prince Giorgi, at the time regent of Somkhet'i (Georgian Armenia), consecrated bishop by the Catholicos Ghukas at Ejmiatsin in 1783 as abbot of Haghpats, to be deposed from his bishopric for having abandoned his monastery after the Lezghian raids of 1785, pardoned at the request of Irakli II and reinstated as abbot of Haghpats but without the rank of bishop, and last mentioned as abbot in 1795, the traditional year of Sayat'-Nova's death. This Davit' the imaginative T'umanyan further identifies with the anonymous 'adviser' (*khraitch'*) and 'preceptor' (*dasatu*) who aided and abetted Abraham, abbot of Haghpats's sister monastery Sanahin, who was in 1783 accused by the Catholicos Ghukas of permitting the marriage of a divorced woman, of abandoning his monastery and appropriating a church in Tiflis as his headquarters, there with his 'crooked' (*tsur*) preceptor to live a life of luxury and pleasure in debauch (*zovgh*, APT *dhauq/zevk*) and folly (*safay*, APT *şafâh*) and merriment (*k'ef*, APT *keyf*), mesmerised by his unseemly eloquence (*ancho'ni chartasanut'yamb*) and asinine pen (*himarakan grch'otz'*).¹ One cannot but wonder why T'umanyan, for whom Sayat'-

¹ *Cit.* T'umanyan, *Sayat'-Nova*, Erevan, 1945 (a thitherto unpublished lecture delivered at Tiflis, 5th December 1913), ed. R. Zaryan, pp. 47-54.

Nova was 'the king of song and music' (*ergi u erazhēshtut'yan t'agawor*), and who wrote a moving elegy in his memory,² should be so ready to identify his hero with such a disreputable character as Dawit' is assumed to be, although he himself is probably much maligned, since there is no evidence to identify him with the anonymous seducer of Abbot Abraham. Part of the pejorative vocabulary used by T'umanyan to describe Abraham and 'Davit's way of life may be an echo of something he read in Sayat'-Nova's work. The equivalents of *zovgh* and *safay* may be found in a verse in the celebrated 1759 ode *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê* 'The world is a cage': *Ashkarēs miz mēnalū ch'ê, k'ani nēstink' zogh u sap'in* 'The world will not remain for us, however much we sit in pleasure (*zogh*) and delight (*sap'a*)'. But the poet is clearly not recommending any sort of hedonism, rather the uselessness of it. A poet's trouble with the Church would, of course, like, say, Gandhi's with the Rāj, in no way diminish him in the eyes of liberals and freethinkers. There is nothing in Sayat'-Nova's life and works that show him to be other than a faithful member of the Armenian Church. But a romantic poet is particularly vulnerable to the romancing of others. Sayat'-Nova, in his Georgian poem *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my wretched head', shows himself to have been a reluctant monk, though the Armenian manuscripts he copied at Haghpat show that he to a large extent came to terms with it. There is absolutely no reliable evidence, or probability, that he ever went 'over the wall'. But the contrast between the life of a famous minstrel and an obscure monk took hold of the popular imagination, and legends soon sprang up. One particularly tenacious one is related in 1852 by his first editor Akhverdian, though he himself afforded it no credit. According to this tale, Sayat'-Nova, now the monk Step'anos but still hankering for the old life (as Khelashvili, of doubtful credibility, showed him to be), hears that a foreign minstrel (*ôtarakan ashugh*), probably meaning a Turk or Azeri, has arrived in Tiflis, and is surprised not to find the famous Sayat'-Nova there. The poet-monk leaves his monastery in lay garb and arranges to cross the foreign minstrel's path. The latter asks the old man whether he knows anything of Sayat'-Nova, to which he replies, in Azeri, *bilmänäm*, by which the

² *Khaghov ekav, / Akhov gēnatz' Sayat'-Novan. / Ergov ekav, / Vêrk'ov gēnatz' Sayat'-Novan. / Sirov ekav, / Sêrov gēnatz' Sayat'-Novan, / Sirov mēnatz' Sayat'-Novan* 'He came with tune, he went with a sigh, Sayat'-Nova. He came with a song, he went with a wound, Sayat'-Nova. He came with love, he went with a sword, Sayat'-Nova. He remains with love, Sayat'-Nova'. Translation cannot do justice to the (for Sayat'-Nova very appropriate) puns *khagh/akh, erg/vêrk', sir/sur*.

inventor of the legend plays on Sayat'-Nova's known penchant for calembours, since this may be interpreted (ignoring, however, the prosody of spoken utterances) either as 'I do not know (of him)', or 'Know, I am he'; then *tanımanam*, 'I do not know him', or (ignoring the rules of vocalic harmony, as *tani*, *mänäm*) 'Recognise (him), I am he'; then *görmänäm*, 'I do not see (him)', or (as *gör*, *mänäm*) 'Look, I am he.' The foreign minstrel hereupon says that he does not believe his informant, since Sayat'-Nova is known everywhere. To which the disguised monk replies, *İnanmanam*, 'I do not believe so', or, again suspending the rules of Turkic phonetics, as *İnan mänäm* 'Believe (it), I am he'. This time the foreign minstrel understands who he has before him, surrenders his *saz* to the great master (which would imply defeat by him in competition), and departs from Tiflis, no doubt a sadder but a wiser man. Hasrat'yan relates this sample of 'customary folklore' as showing the respect in which Sayat'-Nova was held in Azeri circles.³ On close analysis, with respect to the question of prosody and vocalic harmony mentioned, the puns are defective. As much as anything, the tale serves as warning not to believe everything that is told concerning the largely unknown life of Sayat'-Nova.

In 1930, the well-known critic Melik'set'-Bek, who was aware of Sayat'-Nova's religious name, published his theory that he and the hitherto obscure Georgian poet and translator Step'ane Mkervali were one and the same person.⁴ The services that Melik'set'-Bek has rendered to Caucasian philology demand that his theory be here examined. Step'ane's Georgian sobriquet *mkervali* means 'one who sews, tailor, shoemaker' (D. Ch'ubinashvili), which has an obvious attraction for those who believe that the *khalat* or 'robe of honour' that Sayat'-Nova in his Azeri allegedly autobiographical poem to be discussed shortly below claims to have presented to his master on the termination of his apprenticeship is to be taken literally. The major drawback to the theory, however, is the fact that Step'ane Mkervali uses as his *makhlaş* or pen-name *Majnun* or *Mijnuri*, i.e. 'Mad in love'.⁵ In his indubitable Georgian

³ H p. xxxv.

⁴ *Sayat'-Nova, kritikul-biograf'iuli etiudi*, K'art'uli tsigni: T'bilisi, 1930, cit. P.M. Muradyan, *Sayat'-Novan est vraz'akan aghbyurneri*, Ac.Sc. Arm. SSR: Erevan, 1963, pp. 48ff. The details of Melik'set'-Bek's theory are taken from Muradyan's work, that of Melik'set'-Bek being unavailable to the present writer.

⁵ Giorgi Leonidze, *Mgosani Saat'nova, biograf'iuli eskizi*, Mart'uli tsigni: T'bilisi, 1930, p. 55, quotes six examples of *majnun*, and one of *mijnuri* from Tiflis (University Museum of Antiquities) MS no. 3686 copied in 1837 by T'eimurazi Batonishvili (who

poems Sayat'-Nova signs off as *Sayat'-Nova*, in two instances accompanied by a form of his Armenian baptismal name, *Arut'in*. The APT adjective he uses in the form *junun* (*Sayat'-Novun junun arir* 'You have driven Sayat'-Nova mad', in *Blbuli hid latz' is êli* 'With the nightingale you, too, weep'), and in its meaning of the lover of Leila he uses the popular form *Mejlum* (*Mejlumi nēman man im gali, yarên êrvats im* 'I wonder about like Mejlum, I am burnt up by the beloved', in *P'ahradēn miṛats* 'P'ahrad (Farhad) being dead'). It would moreover make no sense for a minstrel to use two pen-names: an author operating from his study could use a variety of pseudonyms, but a public performer such as an *ashugh* would wish, and need, to be unambiguously recognised. In the matter of style, especially disputatious when dealing with a genre of poetry by nature given to extravagant conceits in the Persian mode, and one in which one and the same poet can produce verse of varying quality (as Sayat'-Nova can), opinions differ, some critics, including native Georgians, able to accept Mkervali as Sayat'-Nova, others, like G. Leonidze, writing also in 1930,⁶ and P.M. Muradyan, in 1963,⁷ forcefully rejecting such an idea. Melik'set'-Bek based his theory on the following facts: (a) in Tiflis Georgian MS no. S1543 the poem *Gulidam ara mshurs* 'In (*lit.* from) (my) heart I bear no envy' is called a *mukhum-basi* (*mukhammas*) by Sayat'-Nova, but in MS no. S3686 a song by Step'ane Mkervali; (b) similarly, the poem *T'valad lamazo, damanakhe sheni piri me* 'O one with the beautiful eyes, look after thy countenance for me (alone)' is so variously attributed in these same manuscripts; (c) in Georgian MS S1543, after known songs by Sayat'-Nova, follow songs by a Pachua Step'ane, who appears to have been known principally as a translator from Azeri, there being in Georgian MS no. S3686, p. 60, a song in Georgian annotated as 'recited by the sister of Ibream Khan, translated by the same Step'ane' (neither Ibream/Ibrahim nor his sister have been identified further). As Muradyan points out,⁸ there is nothing to link Sayat'-Nova/Step'anos with the Georgian Step'ane other than what must be the confusion of scribes and editors. Muradyan has no difficulty in compiling a list of seven other Step'ane's known to have flourished in the eighteenth century in Georgia, albeit none a minstrel or

commissioned Ioane's MS of 1823) in St. Petersburg, at the request of Grigol Dadian (Muradyan, p. 65, n. 33).

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 48-69 ('Sayat'-Nova-Step'anos ev Step'anos Derdzak-Majnun').

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

weaver (or tailor). The present writer has not himself been able to compare the poetry of Step'ane Mkervali with that of Sayat'-Nova, and must, while permitting himself a few remarks in parentheses, rely upon the collation of Muradyan, on the whole convincing. Muradyan notes the following stylistic discrepancies: (a) Step'ane Mkervali indulges excessively in interjections, with which Sayat'-Nova is sparing: SM *vai, vai! ra dzneli qop'ilia k'vriobis dardi* 'Woe, woe! how heavy is the pain of widowhood!', *mep'obs tz'etz'khlebi, hai hai hai, ats vidagebi* 'Fires reign! Hi, hi, hi, now I suffer!'; SM's Georgian grammar differs from that of SN: SN *es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris* 'These things are from my own mind', SM *ratz'rom miqo, adgils gak'vs, chkuisa ch'emgnit' aris* 'That which has come upon me, you are right: it is from my own mind' [though an individual speaker's grammar allows some latitude and variety, the force of this grammatical argument will be taken up below; some might legitimately wonder, however, whether the identity of the sentiment here expressed might not outweigh the grammar. CD]; SM employs Armenisms unusual in Georgian [why this should be, Muradyan does not speculate, though the implication would be that Mkervali was, at least like Sayat'-Nova, an Armenian. CD], but foreign to SN: SM *shen me matrialeb rogortz'rom ch'arkhi* 'You spin me round like (= Arm. *inch'pês or*) a wheel'; *adgils gak'vs* lit. 'you have place' = Arm. *tegh unis* 'you have place', both in the sense of 'you are right' [I do not know this expression, which is not listed by Malkhasyantz', CD]; *utz'khos adgil* = Arm. *urish tegh* 'in another place' [here Muradyan risks jeopardising his case by what looks like a desperate scraping of the bottom of the barrel: the Georgian expression means rather 'in a strange or foreign place; 'in another place' would be usually be *skhva adgils*, but in any case D. Ch'ubinashvili lists *utz'kho* and *skhva* as synonyms for 'foreign, strange' ('inostranniî, chuzhoî'); *utz'kho, skhvis adgilidam mosuli* 'foreign (*utz'kho*), coming from another/foreign/strange (*skhva*) place']; (d) although there are extant three to four times as many poems by Sayat'-Nova as by Step'ane Mkervali, repetitions in the latter are more numerous, e.g. *alvis khe* 'poplar', *ok'ros saati* 'gold watch', *mijnuri* 'mad with love', *khelis agheba* 'lift the hands', i.e. 'give up', *khorbali* 'wheat' [this is not a good argument: one could make a selection of SN's verse which would show him to be very repetitious. CD]; (f) the terms in which Mkervali addresses the beloved are inferior to those of SN: e.g. SM 'You must keep me, whether I am good or bad'; 'you spin me round like a wheel'; 'even though you do lavish

your charm upon another, you are still pretty'; 'night and day my body is rent with claws' [I should not like to have to guarantee that Sayat'-Nova is incapable of such expressions, and he can be ironic with respect to a lady's charms, e.g. an excess of beauty-spots. CD]; (g) SM signs off as *Majnun* or *Mijnuri*, not as *Sayat'-Nova*, a major point made already in 1930 by Leonidze [Muradyan is right⁹ to reject Melik'set'-Bek's — despite his hopes — completely unsubstantiated view that Sayat'-Nova used more than two pen-names which 'further research would reveal', research in the last sixty or so years having revealed nothing of the sort and never, for reasons I have given above, ever likely to].

There can be little doubt that Leonidze and Muradyan have successfully demolished Melik'set'-Bek's theory that Sayat'-Nova and Step'ane Mkervali were one and the same. But Sayat'-Nova would not be Sayat'-Nova if his study led to perfect harmony, and with respect to the attribution of one poem these two scholars, both much concerned with matters of language, style, and taste, find themselves on different sides, a predicament which may well serve as a warning to proceed with great caution in one's approach to our (often deliberately) ambiguous poet. As briefly mentioned above in item (a) of Melik'set'-Bek's theory, the poem beginning *Gulidam ara mshurs suli shent'vina* 'Gladly (*lit.* from the heart, = *gulit'* "von Herzen gern", Tschenkeli) my soul bears no envy in your regard' has been variously attributed to both Sayat'-Nova and Mkervali. The fifth and final quintain begins with what is possibly a reference to the *makhlas* of Mkervali, viz. *mijnuri*, although it could be interpreted literally as 'one mad with love'. It is a variant reading in the fourth verse of the same stanza from which the controversy stems. In Tiflis (University Museum of Antiquities) MS no. 3274, the stanza, as reproduced by Leonidze,¹⁰ reads:

Saqvarelo, mijnurs ratom ashlikhar?
vin mogtsamla? chkuidame sheshlikhar.
vai shen ch'emo ok'ros saato moshlikhar.
gazap'khulis vardo, p'erad gashlikhar.
mt'it' ch'amova bulbulebi shent'vina.

'Beloved, why have you confused me, Mijnuri (*or* one made with love).
 Who has poisoned you? You are confused in mind.
 Alas, my golden watch! You have gone wrong!

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 56. Amazingly, Muradyan, p. 67, does not quote the vital fourth-verse variant.

O rose of springtime, you have blossomed in (full) colour.
From the mountain the nightingales have come for you.'

In the text as published by the ashugh Skandar-Nova in 1875,¹¹ and probably relying upon him, as Muradyan surmises,¹² by the literary critic I. Grishashvili in 1918,¹³ the fourth and fifth verses of the fifth stanza read:

Saiat'novat'vis vardad gashlikhar.
Mt'idam ch'amova bulbuli shent'vina

'For Sayat'nova you have blossomed into a rose.
From the mountain the nightingale has come for you.'

Leonidze's reaction to this variant, which he finds 'obscure' (*bundovani*), 'senseless' (*uazro*), and 'inappropriate' (*ualago*-),¹⁴ though perhaps a rendering of the last epithet as 'inconvenient' ('unpassend', Tschenkeli) would better describe the situation, suggests a degree of exasperation that the history of philosophy often shows to be a human reaction to unexpected facts. He has no high opinion of the poem, finding the image (in both versions) of a gold watch blossoming into a rose somewhat disappointing (one is compelled here to warn that it is inadvisable when dealing with romantic poetry of this nature to approach it with a Wodehousian sense of humour). He finds the following images in the poem too lacking in taste (*ugemuri*) for Sayat'-Nova's 'sensitive lyricism' (*mgrdznobiare lirizmi*):

sakhit' shen sjobikhar dakhatul khatsa

'By your countenance you excel, a drawn picture'

(But confer Sayat'-Nova's *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats, t'ahrët rangê rang is anum* 'Your image drawn with a pen, you make your aspect multicoloured', 1759¹⁵).

k'argis kerva amjobine ostatsa

'The needlework of (your) embroidery-frame bests the master'

(This reference to *kerva* 'sewing', not unexpected in a minstrel sur-named *Mkervali* 'tailor, one who sews', is nowhere (else?) found in the

¹¹ *Khalkhino sazandari*, Tiflis, 1875, pp. 66-67, 1895, p. 80, 1912, p. 90, refs. from Muradyan, *op. cit.*, p. 66, n. 35.

¹² Muradyan, *ibid.*, n. 36.

¹³ *K'art' k'restomatia*, t. II, Tiflis, pp. 120-121, ref. Muradyan, *ibid.*, n. 34.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁵ H p. 7.

work of Sayat'-Nova, not even in such a textiliar Georgian poem as his *Ra zarbabi, ra atlası, ra zari var, itz'i gana?* 'What brocade, what satin, what cloth of gold I am, do you know?'¹⁶).

sul shen agondebi mt'el k'veqanasa

'Only you are heard by the whole world'

(One cannot but admit that this is a sentiment that seems too downright daft for Sayat'-Nova, who, though he claims to have travelled the whole world (*t'amam ashkharh*), says only that he has seen nobody to compare with his beloved's beauty'¹⁷).

metz' ghamit' t'valebshi dzali ar mak'vsa

'I also at night have no power in the eyes'

(Not to be able to see in the dark is not an unnatural condition).

eshkhit' gavkhdi guli tsquli shent'vina

'I am wounded in the heart by love on account of you'

(This is a sentiment common to all minstrels, and one that Sayat'-Nova expresses frequently: *Eshkhemet hivandatz'il im ... sirtēs eshkhem enrats ê ...* 'I am grown sick for love of you ... my heart is burnt up by love'¹⁸).

bnelshi anat'eb, rogortz' p'anosi

'You shine in the dark like a lantern'

(Sayat'-Nova's beloved usually shines by day and night: *anat'eb k'veqanas, mt'vare da mze khar* 'You shine unto the world, you are the moon and the sun'¹⁹).

qvela lamazzeda shen gak'vs namusi

'Above all beauties you have renown'

(Although he uses APTAz *nâmûs* 'veneration, honour, etc.' in Azeri — e.g. in *Qorkhram* 'I fear', st. 3, v. 6, *Tetrak*, p. 47, *Araslı*, p. 57, Sayat'-Nova does not (otherwise?) appear to use it in his Georgian and Armenian poems).

¹⁶ B p. 47. Or in *Gikhdeba zari, ok'ros ghili, t'ana shenia* 'You have put on cloth of gold, golden button(s) you wear', B p. 33.

¹⁷ T p. 124, Ioane, p. 66, Hasrat'yan, p. 51.

¹⁸ T p. 138, Ioane, p. 61A, H p. 52.

¹⁹ In *Khar turp'a* 'You are beautiful', B p. 12.

The poem *Gulidam ara mshurs* has no particular merit. T'eimurazi Batonishvili, who by his dates and his close acquaintance with Sayat'-Nova's son Ioane was closest to Sayat'-Nova, in his manuscript S3686 of 1837, as we have seen,²⁰ attributed it to Step'ane Mkervali. Baramidze does not include it in his edition of Sayat'-Nova's verse, and Hasrat'yan and Gaysaryan have no place for it in their translations. Like MS S1543, however, Muradyan wishes to claim it for Sayat'-Nova. One cannot but feel that the aesthetic and philological sense that has led him to reject Melik'set'-Bek's identification of Step'ane Mkervali with Sayat'-Nova has here abandoned him. There would seem to be much truth in the adage that, whereas a man may deal with his enemies for himself, it is from his friends that he needs protection. We have seen how ready T'umanyan was to impute a most disreputable rôle and character to Sayat'-Nova as monk, and it is only the minstrel's fans, well-meaning but ignorant, who have cast aspersions on what no evidence can suggest was other than a perfectly blameless life as a monastic scribe. Muradyan, who successfully demolishes the theory of the identity of Sayat'-Nova and Step'ane Mkervali on grounds of literary taste and grammar, now throws himself open to the very weapons he has himself employed. He who finds Step'ane's images trite and repetitious is keen to admit an image representing the beloved as a gold watch that has stopped ticking and blossomed into a rose, as well as all the other banalities listed by Leonidze, whose work he knows. He finds discrepancies between Sayat'-Nova's and Step'ane Mkervali's Georgian grammar. But the grammar of *Gulidam ara mshurs* is itself somewhat suspect. The opening word *Gulidam* itself is peculiar enough for the native Georgian scholar Leonidze to place a question mark in parentheses after it.²¹ It is a dialectal form of the Modern Georgian ablative suffix in *(i)dan*, which has developed from the ancient instrumental in *-it'* followed by the ablative postposition *-gan*.²² The present writer has found this form otherwise only in one other poem attributed to Sayat'-Nova but which does not figure in Ioane's manuscript or the few hemistichs that are all the *Tetrak* contains of Georgian verse, viz. *ghrublidam* 'from the cloud' in *Mtkvaro amghvreulo* 'O turbulent (River) Kur', which is enough to raise

²⁰ Above, n. 5, and p. 40.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

²² Cf. H. Vogt, *Grammaire de la langue géorgienne [moderne]*, Oslo, 1971, pp. 73-74, §1.105 'cas élatif en *-(i)dan*'; the variant *(i)dam(a)* is not there mentioned.

suspicions concerning the authenticity of the poem.²³ In the very example quoted by Muradyan,²⁴ where Mkervali has the strange form *chkvisa ch'emgnit'*, Sayat'-Nova has the ancient literary *ch'emis chkvisagan* 'from my mind'. In the variant accepted by Muradyan containing the mention of Sayat'-Nova by name, the form *mt'idam* 'from the mountain' cannot otherwise be found in Sayat'-Nova's Georgian verse, where *mt'idgan*, nearer the ancient form *mt'it'gan*, is found.²⁵ The poet would have no reason to use a variety of forms, since both *mt'idam* and *mt'idgan* have the same number of syllables, the more dialectal form having therefore no metrical advantage. An objection could be made to the effect that these are alternative grammatical forms in 18th century Georgian. But in general, one speaker (of Saussure's *parole*) will not use all the forms theoretically available in the language in its entirety (*langage*). An English speaker, for example, will opt for one pronunciation of *often* from the two in current use, pronouncing it either with or without the *-t*. Similarly, Sayat'-Nova's usual ablative in *-idgan* echoes the dental of the prior form *-it'gan*, when he does not use, probably as higher style, the ancient *-isa-gan*. The matter, however, is far from sure. *Ghulidam ara mshurs* and *Mtkvaro amghvreulo* need meticulous stylistic inspection, which may expel any doubts concerning their correct attribution to Sayat'-Nova; for the present, however, these doubts should not be swept under the carpet as inconvenient.

Can one, like Leonidze, reject the variant mentioning Sayat'-Nova out of hand, when the trouble it has caused literary critics alone would seem to qualify it as a *lectio difficilior*? There may be no need. Both versions of st. 5 of *Gulidam ara mshurs* read *mijnurs* in the first verse. This could be the poet's *makhlas*, thus attributing the poem to Step'ane Mkervali. The verse saying 'For Sayat'nova you have blossomed into a rose' might be a nod in the direction of a fellow and more famous minstrel, and mean that the beloved has blossomed into a rose for his rival, but, as the rest of the stanza makes clear, not for him. The present writer knows of no parallel to this, however, and it is more probable that another minstrel, singing the song after the death of both Sayat'-Nova and Step'ane Mkervali, amended the text in performance, and thus threw a cat of some size among the pigeons of scribes and editors and critics.

²³ See below, Chapter Seven p. 274, n. 100.

²⁴ Above, p. 50.

²⁵ *Galobs t'ut'i* 'The parrot sings', st. 1, v. 3, Baramidze, p. 35.

Despite the attribution in MS S15543, which Muradyan trusts concerning *Gulidam ara mshurs*, of the poem *T'valad lamazo, damanakhe sheni piri me* 'O one with the beautiful eyes, look after your countenance for me' to Sayat'-Nova, Muradyan, like Leonidze, Baramidze, Hasrat'yan, etc., does not admit as the work of our poet, but leaves it, with T'emurazi Batonishvili's MS 3686, to Step'ane Mkervali.²⁶ Sayat'-Nova does address the beloved as *t'valad lamazo* in *Gikhdeba zari* 'You have put on cloth of gold'²⁷, but the expression is too commonplace to be of any significance. In the same poem, the fifth quintain of which contains Sayat'-Nova's *makhlas*, reference is made to *mijnuri*,²⁸ but here, of course, it is used merely in its literal sense of 'one mad with love'.

Included in an account of the uncertainties and legends surrounding Sayat'-Nova's life must be his own professedly 'autobiographical' Azeri poem which a marginal note in the *Tetrak*²⁹ calls a *sujut'lama*, a nominal form predicated on an infinitive verb *sujut'lamaq* (*sucutlamak*), not listed by Redhouse or Äzizbây, which would mean 'to perform APT *sujûd*', i.e. 'prostrating oneself in (Muslim) worship, a bowing down, (for mystics an annihilating human characteristics in the effects of divine manifestation' (Redhouse). This title may not very accurately describe the contents of the poem, but on what grounds Hasrat'yan (p. 267) calls it a *javsat'lama* (?? for **jasad-nâmeh*, on APT *jasad* 'body; (mystics) a form, idea, prototype, as existing in the world of ideas or real significations, a reality', Redhouse), and Arasli (pp. 61-2) a *vujûd-nâmeh* (APT *vujûd* 'existence, body') is unclear. Although it begins with thanks to the Creator, there is little in the poem expressive of gratitude for existence. Not that one ever expects much optimism on the part of Sayat'-Nova. He is more likely, as he records for his thirtieth year, to represent himself writhing like a serpent, a victim of real or imagined pangs of love. In this poem the poet purports to outline the main events of his life, first month by month, then year by year, finally quinquennium by quinquennium, from birth to his 95th year. The tone of the poem is self-deprecating and ironic, with wry touches of humour: 'my 60th year has passed, I am accepted into (the ranks of) old men ... my 80th year has passed, one foot is in the grave'. The poem was, in fact, written long

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

²⁷ St. 2, v. 3, B p. 33.

²⁸ St. 1, v. 5, B *ibid*.

²⁹ Below, n. 29.

before his 60th, let alone his 80th year, though he lived to see both (he never reached the projected 95th year, dying, if the 1712-95 dating be correct, at the age of 83 or 84). How much one can believe of what he related concerning the years already lived is largely a matter of faith.

Curiously, two different dates are appended to the poem in the annotations in the *Tetrak*. The clearest is that in the right-hand margin of p. 75, which reads, in Georgian, 'This *sujut'lama* was recited by Arut'in on August 6th 441 of the chronicon (= A.D. 1753)'.³⁰ A briefer note at the end of the poem on p. 76 reads in Georgian, 'January 3rd 438 of the chronicon', i.e. A.D. 1750.³¹ A close examination of the characters of the two inscriptions suggests, tantalisingly, that they were written by the same hand. It is possible that 1750 refers to the composition of the poem, and 1753 to its public recital. The poet would thus be aged about 38 to 41, a good point (*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*) from which to survey one's life.

The poem runs as follows:

*Shuk'ur olsun iaradana, var edan p'arvardigara.
 Ab ik'an, t'op'ragh ik'an, dushtum q(i)zil samandara.
 Vakhti k'i bad alishti qalamadan dushtum davt'ara.
 Halbat' haqun beirughidur dushtum lamak'an shahara.*

*Uch aium t'amam oldi, khabar oldi nur madara.
 Alt'i aium t'amam oldi, sighindum qizil k'amara.
 Doquz aium t'amam oldi, ch'aghirim mevlam qurt'ara.
 Jansat' oldum nap'as, goz ach'tum, dushtum bahara.*

*Bir ilum t'amam oldi, o qudrat' iaghdan aldum.
 Ik'i ilum t'amam oldi, anamun mamasin ialdum.
 Uch' ilum t'amam oldi, aghleip' beshigda qaldum.
 Dort' ilum t'amam oldi, gezdum, aiagh bastum iera.*

*Besh ilum t'amam oldi, dila geldum, ham dahana.
 Alt'i ilum t'amam oldi, uruskhat' oldi dandana.
 Iedi ilum t'amam oldi, qast eiladum ab u nana.
 Sak'iz ilum t'amam oldi, goz ach'tum, dushtum bahara.*

*Doquz ilum t'amam oldi, hala olmamisham belu.
 On ilum t'amam oldi, geziram dalu dalu.
 On bir ilum t'amam oldi, ch'unk'i olajagham ahlu.
 On ik'i ilum t'amam oldi, t'ap'surdilar ustak'ara.*

*On uch' ilum t'amam oldi, ograndum t'amam sanat'.
 On dort' ilum t'amam oldi, ustam iet'urdum khalat'.*

.....

On besh [for alt'i?] ilum t'amam oldi, mansur at'tum agh u qara.

³⁰ *ese sujut'lama arut'inas nat'k'omi mariamobist'ivs V k'(roni)ks UMA.*

³¹ *ianvaris G k'(roni)ks U.L.He.*

*On iedi ilum t'amam oldi, hala olmamisham dastan.
 On sak'iz ilum t'amam oldi, gordum gul u gulistan.
 On doquz ilum t'amam oldi, gezdum Habash u Hindistan.
 Igirmi ilum t'amam oldi, lal sat'aram sovdagara.*

*Igirmi beshum t'amam oldi, girip' meidana suzaram.
 Ot'uz ilum t'amam oldi, ajdahi olub gezaram.
 Ot'uz beshum t'amam oldi, ei yazaram, ei p'ozaram.
 Qirkh ilum t'amam oldi, har sheim ch'(ě)khti t'aiara.*

*Qirkh beshum t'amam oldi, har isha oldum khabardar.
 Ali ilum t'amam oldi, uzuma baslandi ar.
 Ali beshum t'amam oldi, ch'okh ch'ak'aram ah u {u} zar.
 Alt'mish ilum t'amam oldi, qat'il oldu babalara.*

*Alt'mish beshum t'amam oldi, ch'okh ch'ak'aram ah u vakh.
 Iet'mish ilum t'amam oldi, gozumdan get'ti shap'agh.
 Iet'mish beshum t'amam oldi, daliam ham da savakh.
 Sak'san ilum t'amam oldi, bir p'ain get'ti mazara.*

*Sak'san beshum t'amam oldi, januma dushti azar.
 Doqsan ilum t'amam oldi, oz{oz}umdan oldum bezar.*

.....
Doqsan beshum t'amam oldi, iat'tum min illi p'adara.

*Gunakh'aram, ham bandiam, koma uzaghalar mani.
 Duniada gunahs(ě)z kim qalur, gozlaun Suleimani.
 Vakhti vada iet' anda, kim sorar Saiat' n(o)vani.
 Bu dunia vaghiadur, nalat' isan eit'ibara.*

Thanks be to the Creator, to the All-nourisher, who gives existence.
 Being water, being earth, I fell into the crimson ocean^a.
 No sooner had breath entered my body, I fell from the pen onto the
 register [of the Recording Angel].
 Certainly it was by the command of God that I descended into the City of
 No Place^b.

My third month (from conception) passed, and the light announced itself to
 my mother^c.

Six months passed, and I was squeezed tight in the crimson chamber.

Nine months passed, and I cried out to the Lord to save me.

My body drew breath, I opened my eyes, I fell into the (season of) Spring.

One year of mine passed. I received that power (that) comes from the
 (holy) oil^d.

Two years passed. I (still) licked my mother's breasts.

Three years passed. I remained bawling in the cradle.

Four years passed. I walked, I set my foot on the ground.

Five years passed. I discovered my tongue, and my mouth.

Six years passed. Strength came to my teeth.

Seven years passed. I made an effort to (take for myself) water and bread^f.
 Eight years passed. I opened my eyes (anew), and fell into (another)
 Spring^g.

Nine years passed. I was still not to be noticed^h.

My tenth year passed. I wander about scattilyⁱ.

My eleventh year passed, since (it is time) I became (truly) part of the
 family^j.

My twelfth year passed. They entrusted^k me to a master craftsman.

My thirteenth year passed. I learned the trade to perfection.

My fourteenth year passed. I sent my master a robe of honour^l.

.....
 My fifteenth (for sixteenth) year passed. I threw black and white scattered
 (all about).^m

My seventeenth year passed. I had not yet become a public-reciterⁿ.

My eighteenth year passed. I perceived the Rose and the Rose-garden^o.

My nineteenth year passed. I journeyed to Abyssinia and India.

My twentieth year passed. I sell rubies to a merchant.

My twenty-fifth year passed. Entering the public-square, I half-close my
 eyes in rapture^p.

My thirtieth year passed. I, a serpent, twist and turn^q.

My thirty-fifth passed. I write well, I bide my time well^r.

My fortieth year passed. All I possess has gone, (washed away) on the
 waves (of the sea)^s.

My forty-fifth has passed. I am informed of every affair.

My fiftieth year has passed. Disgrace is stamped upon my face.

My fifty-fifth has passed. I utter many a plaintive sigh.

My sixtieth year has passed. I have joined (the ranks of) old men.

My sixty-fifth has passed. I utter many Alas's and Lackadays.

My seventieth year has passed. The brightness^t has gone from my eye.

My seventieth year has passed. I am crazy and wild^u.

My eightieth year has passed. One foot^v is in the grave.

My eighty-fifth has passed. Sickness has entered my soul.

My ninetieth year has passed. I am fed up with myself.

.....
 My ninety-fifth (for hundredth?) has passed. I have joined the thousand
 and fifty fathers.

I am a sinner, a slave, do not keep me at arm's length for that^w.

In this world who is there without sin? Look to Solomon!

When his time for saying farewell comes, who will ask after Sayat^f-Nova?

This world is vanity. A curse upon fidelity!^x

a *samandar*-. Hasrat'yan, p. 242, note to (Azeri) no. 25, and *Glossary*, p. 312, hesitates to read this as P *samandar* 'salamander', preferring Urdu/Hindi *samundar*, *samandar* 'sea, ocean' (Sanskrit *samudra*, Platts, p. 677). N. Kh. Gevorgyan, 'Sayat'-Novayi mi

k'ani patkneri meknabanut' yan masin', *Patma-banasirakan Handes*, 1984, no. 4 (107), pp. 200-202, accepts the meaning 'salamander', taking this reptile which is traditionally thought to dwell in fire as a metaphor for 'blood', with reference to ancient and medieval physiological notions that conception takes place by the mingling of the male seed with menstrual blood. In the case of the use of *samandar* in the phrase *unk'it samandarit ernek* 'blessings upon the salamander (?) of your eyebrows' in *Ajab k'ani zhamanak ê* 'How much time has passed?' (Hasrat'yan, Arm. no. 25, p. 38), Gevorgyan adduces phrases such as *Anghalam, anzarnish k'ashats, osku pês ê p'aylum unk'êt* 'not drawn with a pen, undamascened, your eyebrows shine like gold' in *Vuntz'or vur gharib bêlbulên me tarov baghin karôt ê* 'Since the wandering Nightingale has been absent from the garden for a year' (*Tetrak*, fol. 120, Hasrathyan, Arm. no. 30, p. 45), and a 17th-century Russian usage *yashcheritsa zhêltaya zhivaya* 'living yellow lizard' in the sense of (an ingot of?) gold, in order to permit a very dubious rendering of *samandar* as 'gold'. The poet is surely referring to the curled shape of the salamander lizard, in the first instance with reference to a duct in the female body, i.e. the womb, in the second to the ideal shape of the beloved's eyebrow, fully in accordance with 18th-century imagery (cf. the similar image in contemporary Ottoman poetry, where 'black locks of hair are often compared to snakes and also to scorpions', E.J.W. Gibb, *A history of Ottoman poetry*, London, (1905) 1967, vol. IV, p. 155, n. 2). The salamander is represented in an elegant curled shape as a heraldic motif (see e.g. A.C. Fox-Davies, *A complete guide to heraldry*, London, 1909, p. 230).

As Gevorgyan notes, the mention of water and earth in the verse relates to the same ideas as those in Elishê's *Araratsotz' meknut'iwn* [Commentary on Genesis]: 'Now fire is more pertinent to the male, water and earth to the female: fire causes curdling, water and earth curdle, air nourishes and vivifies; for if the fire become not blood, it cannot heat the air and blow warm along the blood vessels' (ref. from a *kandidatura* thesis by Gh. Khach'ikyan on the commentary attributed to Elishê, Erevan University, 1945, unpublished, cit. Gevorgyan, p. 200).

b *lamak'an shahara*. Hasrat'yan, p. 207, translates 'Soilless homeland' (*anhogh vat'a-n-i*), explaining it (footnote *ibid.*) as meaning the womb, a plausible conjecture. *lamak'an* (A *lâ-makân*) means literally 'no-place': cf. *Sûratesh bar khâk wa jân bar lâ-makân, lâ makânî fawqi wahmi sâlikân* 'His form is on earth and his spirit in 'No-place', a 'No-place' beyond the imagination of travellers (on the mystic path)', Jalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî, *Mathnawî*, I, v. 1581, tr. R.A. Nicholson, London, 1960, p. 87.

c Or, if *nurmadar-* is a single concept, 'light-mother', as Hasrat'yan introduces it into v. 10 (*lus-mayr-s*), 'the news came to my light-mother'; cf. the expression *loysi bazhin lini* 'may he or she have a share in the light, i.e. Paradise', a blessing upon the departed, cit. Malkhasyantz', s.v. *loys*. Or *nur* may be used as *loys* in the expression *loys ashkharh* 'light world', i.e. 'world of light' where we live, in contrast to the *mut'n ashkharh* 'world of darkness, the underworld', as used in folktales (cf. Russ. *belîi svet* 'white world'), cit. Malkhasyantz', *ibid.*: i.e. 'living mother'.

d Hasrat'yan, p. 207, n. 2, is surely right to interpret this *yagh* 'oil' to refer to the *meron* or baptismal unction of the Armenian Church.

e *uruskhat'* must be connected with A *rasakha, arsakha, rassakha* 'strengthen', (**ruskhat'*^{un} 'strength'), the root *r.s.kh.* being attested in the usual Persian and Turkish dictionaries only in the form *raskh* and only with the extended meaning 'transmigration of the soul of a man into a plant or tree' (Steingass), 'inorganic metempsychosis' (Redhouse). It is not listed in the Azeri dictionary of Âzizbây, but since Sayat'-Nova is not known to have been an Arabic scholar, it is to Azeri that one must look for his source. Possible, though less likely, is, with metathesis, APT *raqş* 'shining'.

f *ab u nana*. The Persian for 'bread' is *nân* not **nâna*. The poet was doubtless thinking of P *âb u dâna* 'water and grain', 'means of subsistence' (Steingass).

g A repetition of the image in v. 8.

h T *belli/bellu olmak* means no more than 'become known, perceived' (Redhouse); Äzizbây's defines Az. *bâlli olmaq* by Russian *viyasnyat'sya* 'explain oneself' and *opredelyat'sya* 'assert oneself' ('seinen Standpunkt bestimmen', Pawlowski), which seems to extend the meaning. But few, except infant prodigies, which Sayat'-Nova does not claim to be, are perceptible, noticed, at the age of nine.

i T *deli*, Az. *dâli* 'mad, confused, touched' (Äzizbây). No reduplication is listed, but Redhouse gives *deli dolu* 'thoughtless, inconsiderate'.

j AT *ahlî* 'tame, domestic, domesticated' (Redhouse). Cf. Az. *ahil* 'aged' ('pozhiłoi', Äzizbây), perhaps rather 'of age'. Hasrat'yan, in translating *khelok* 'intelligent', was thinking of *aqlu*, but this would have been written *aghlu*.

k T.Az. *tapshırmaq* 'deliver, give up to another, recommend, commit to the care of another' (Redhouse). SN -s- for T.Az. -sh-. P *ustâkar* 'master craftsman'.

l APT *khil'at*. See above, Ch. One, pp. 8-10.

m The verse scheme shows that this must be the sixteenth verse, with the preceding verse 15 now missing. Hasrat'yan supplies the latter as 'In the fifteenth (year) [I made a great effort, associated myself with writing and pen(manship)]', an achievement the poet is unlikely to have omitted, even out of carelessness, as well as being possibly referred to in the present verse. Here *mansur* is interpreted, as suggested by Professor Geoffrey Lewis, as A *manthûr*, P *manşûr*, T *mensur*, Az *mânsur* 'sown broadcast, scattered, not metrical, prose'. APT *manşûr* 'victorious', thus 'Victoriously I threw black and white', cannot be dismissed. See commentary below.

n PT *dastân* 'a story', but also used as 'story-teller'.

o I.e. became aware of the interests of the Nightingale, the Rose being the symbol of the Beloved, the Rose-garden of her dwelling-place.

p T *süzme* 'strain, filter, examine carefully and amend, to half-close (the eyes) from drowsiness, intoxication, or rapture' (Redhouse).

q Lit. 'move around'. A poor rhyme.

r T.Az. *pusmaq* 'crouch as to hide oneself, lie in wait' (Redhouse). Redhouse gives also the meanings, not listed by Äzizbây, 'become downcast, grieved, or offended', not pertinent here because of the adverb *ei* 'well'; SN uses this Western Turkish form (T *eyi*, *iyi*) rather than the usual Azeri *yakhshî* because the metre requires a monosyllable, as *ei* is here to be read.

s APT *taiyâr* 'wave, billow, surge' (Steingass). The sea is usually connected with drowning in SN's verse. Hasrat'yan, thinking probably of APT *tâ'ir* (vulg. T. *tâyır*) 'flying, flight, a bird, an omen from the flight of birds (especially a bad one)' (Steingass; Redhouse, concurring with respect to the *bad* omen, adds 'the constellation Cygnus'), interprets the phrase optimistically to mean 'my possessions reached up to the vault of Heaven', which would suggest a positive meaning for the following verse, but seems implausible.

t APTaz *shafaq*, *shâfâq*, which Steingass and Redhouse associate with the light of dusk or dawn, but for which Äzizbây gives more general Azeri meanings of 'shine, radiance', as here.

u T *sâvaq* 'wild, impulsive' (Redhouse). Hasrat'yan confuses this with Arm. *zawak* 'child': 'Again they call me a child' (*noritz' manuk en indz asum*, p. 208).

v Text *p'ain*, to be amended to *p'aim* P.-T. *pâ-yim* 'my foot' (not 'thy foot'!)

w *uzaghalar*, to be amended to *uzaghlara* 'to those distant' (T *ûzâq* 'distant').

x *nalat' isan eit'ibara*, meaning literally 'if thou art a curse to good-faith' (APT *i'tibâr*, Az. *etibar*, 'faith, confidence, belief, esteem, respect, authority', Steingass) needs emendation, though there is no need to go as far as Araslı, who changes the text to read *nâ bakhîrsan e'tibara* 'if you do not look to esteem/observe authority'. Hasrat'yan (p. 207) reads *isan* as APTaz *insân* 'man, human being', as it occurs elsewhere in SN's

Azeri poems, translating *anêtsk' mardu eyt'ibarin* 'a curse on the good-faith of a man'. This must be the meaning, in line with the sentiment expressed in *Ashkharēs me p'anjara e*: 'You (simple) fellow, fed on raw milk, a curse be upon your good-faith' (*Hum kat'nakir at'ami zat', nal(at') ile et k'u bap'in* [APTaz *wafâ', vâfa*]); the same poem says that 'Fortune has no respect (*eyt'ibar*) (for persons)' (*Dovlat'ên eit'ibar ch'unê*), and that 'He is a sound fellow, who maintains his esteem (*eyt'ibar-*) in the world' (*Lav mart'n ên ê, glukhên pahê ashkharumēs eit'ibarov*), *Tetrak*, p. 133, Ioane, fol. 63A, Hasrat'yan, p. 70, vv. 14, 5, 6. The gist therefore of the present phrase is that there is no reward for good faith or honesty in this world, rather a curse upon it, but the grammar is difficult to reconcile with this. 'A curse, if thou art (given) unto good-faith' strains the use of *olmak* 'to be'. 'A curse upon the good-faith of a man' would require **i(n)sân etibarsîna*. The simplest emendation, and one that would bring the phrase completely in line with *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê*, would be to read *olsun* 'may there be', the equivalent of the Armenian optative *ile* 'may there be' of the said poem: 'a curse be upon good-faith!'.

The poem shows signs of hasty composition. A verse is missing from stanza 6, and the probability is that it concerned the year *on besh* 'fifteen', and that the last verse of the quatrain, as one can establish it because of the recurrent rhyme, is meant to concern *on alt'i* 'Sixteen'. The 11th stanza also lacks a verse, and it looks as though the third verse, not the final verse, should concern *doqsan besh* 'Ninety-five', and that the final verse, with the recurrent rhyme, should have concerned the missing **iuz* (*yüz*) 'Hundred'.

How much actual biographical fact there is in this poem is clearly a matter of conjecture. Whether Sayat'-Nova expected it to be taken seriously is not at all sure. Its designation as a *sujut'lama* implies that it was a pious undertaking, but it is not certain that the poet himself gave it the title written in the margin of the *Tetrak*. But as has been said above in Chapter One, where an anticipatory attempt has been made to evaluate this poem with regard to the trade that Sayat'-Nova claims to have learned from his twelfth to thirteenth year and his career as a minstrel, an autobiography is unlikely to be all fiction. The difficulty lies in separating the true from the false, or at least the credible from the incredible.

The reference to black and white in his 15th (actually 16th year) seems ambiguous. The version, reading *mansur at'tam* as 'scatteredly I threw black and white', might mean, as Professor Geoffrey Lewis interprets it, 'I failed to distinguish white from black', i.e. 'I had not reached years of discretion'. This would be corroborated by the description in the *Shâhnâme* of the infant Zal, exposed on Mount Elbruz, as being an innocent child who 'could not distinguish between black and white'.³²

³² In Friedrich Rückert's version, 'Solch ein unschuldig Fürstenkind, / dem Schwarz und Weiß noch einerlei sind' (Friedrich Rückert Werke, ed. Annemarie Schimmel, Insel Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1988, Band 2, p. 64).

This might seem too self-deprecating for one who, though admitting that in his tenth year he had wandered about scattily, nevertheless claimed that by his thirteenth year he had learned his trade to perfection, and by fourteen had passed out with the necessary honours. But it may be a confession that his moral sense was not so developed. Hasrat'yan translates the verse, skimming over the *manthur/manşur* problem, but tending towards the more positive latter alternative, as 'I became acquainted with evil and good', thus similarly interpreting black and white as ethical metaphors (cf. P *siyâh shudani nâmah* 'book in which one's evil [*lit.* black] deeds are recorded, to be atoned for on the Day of Judgment', Steingass). What most probably, alternatively or additionally, lies behind this verse are other Persian expressions, *siyâh u safîd farq kardan* 'to distinguish black from white', i.e. to read a book', *sawâd dashtan* 'to have black', i.e. 'to read a book' (AP *sawâd* 'blackness, reading, learning, writing'), *sawâd tund kardan* 'to make black quickly', i.e. 'to acquire or produce the faculty of writing and reading' (Steingass). After the end of his career as a minstrel, Sayat'-Nova was to owe his livelihood to this faculty, since it enabled him to qualify as a literate priest, and the monkish scribe of Armenian manuscripts. It is no pretension to precocity merely to claim to be able to read by the age of sixteen, though the majority of his fellow citizens would not have acquired this skill, and something more would be meant by it, as when, smarting under some unspecified insult at the Georgian court, he protests, 'I know the alphabet. Let no-one say I am a child',³³ which is as much to say 'I know what's what!' The most plausible interpretation of this verse is that he has begun to write, not in the sense of knowing his ABC, but as, for example, Keats and Dickens discovered at an early age that they could write, i.e. were writers. To interpret *mansur* as 'victorious(ly)' would mean that he was proud of his skill. The preferred reading *manthûr* 'in a scattered fashion' would mean that he had not yet acquired the necessary discipline: he had not yet become a public performer by the age of 17, as he next says, and may have discarded writings at this age as juvenilia.

The poet's claim to have by the age of nineteen travelled to Abyssinia and India has not been accepted by everyone as the literal truth. But he makes a similar claim in his 1958 Armenian ode, *T'amam ashkhar pêtut*

³³ *Ana-bana vitz'i ... Nurvin itqvîť, es qmashvili vina var*, in *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs varsklavîs skhivî* 'How can the [faint] rays of a star [such as my gaudy courtly calumniator] dry up a [mighty] ocean [such as myself]', st. 5, vv. 1, 2, 4, ed. B p. 30, I fol. 16a, H p. 115. The absence of a version of this important poem from Gaysaryan's selection is surprising.

eka, ch'ë t'oghi Habash, nazani 'I have travelled the whole world over, not omitting Abyssinia, gracious one'.³⁴ Already in his 1953 Armenian ode, *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is*, he expresses fear lest his grave should be in such exotic parts: *Sayat'-Novu gerezmanên Hind, Habash, Arab mi ani* 'Do not build the tomb of Sayat'-Nova in India, Abyssinia, Arabia'.³⁵ At the age of 20, he claims, he is selling rubies to a merchant. Is this to be taken literally, or does he mean, the ruby being a favourite gem, that he is casting pearls before swine, as, amending the nature of the jewel in *Matthew* 7,6, he fears he may be doing in another 1958 Armenian poem: *Mi atsi khuzi artz'ivên lal u govhar, Sayat'-Nova* 'Do not cast rubies and gems before a hog, Sayat'-Nova!'.³⁶ It could perhaps mean that he has been forced to sell the works of his spirit for cash. And is his assertion that 'In the world I am a merchant, O you bazaar of Marand. I have not the money for brocade, I have come for coarse cloth' (*shoris k'veqnis vachari var, shen maranis bazaro, / zarbabis p'asi ara mak'vs, khamisat'vin tsamovedi*)³⁷ merely a way of expressing his insignificance beside his beloved's greatness? On the other hand, if he had a trade, and was a journeyman, why should he not have been a traveller? Abyssinia was, and to a great extent still is, a monophysite Christian country in communion with the Armenians. Armenian architecture has had an obvious influence on Abyssinian church buildings, and in the present century Armenian Orthodox priests have directed Abyssinian theological seminaries. Commercial contacts are a matter of fact. India, in particular Madras, had become the home, since the 17th century, of Armenian merchants and priests, mainly from New Julfa at Isfahan. Two possible Hinduisms, otherwise a little surprising, in his work, viz. the use of *p'anjara* as 'cage' in *Ashkharës me p'anjara ê* 'This world is a cage' (though others may not concur with this rendering, preferring 'window'), and the use of *samandar* in this Azeri poem in the sense of Urdu/Hindi *samandar* 'sea, ocean' (note a) could point to some Indian influence. Hasrat'yan and others³⁸ have suggested that Sayat'-Nova may have been taken with Irakli and other Georgian nobles to Kandahar in Afghanistan by Nadir Shah in 1736, and accompanied Irakli with the Shah during the latter's Indian campaign, when the

³⁴ T p. 124, Ioane, fol. 66r, Hasrat'yan, (Arm.) no. 35, p. 51, Gaysaryan, p. 96.

³⁵ Ioane, fol. 64r, H (Arm.) no. 10, p. 70.

³⁶ In *Ari hamov quluq ara*, T p. 135, I fol. 71r, H (Arm.) no. 37, p. 53, st. 3, v. 4.

³⁷ In *Gana me mshieri viqav* 'Was I hungry', I fol. 6r, B p. 51, st. 3, vv. 3-4.

³⁸ H p. xi.

Georgian prince was present at the siege of Delhi. If this were so, it would be of interest for the date of the poet's birth, for since he says he was 19 when visiting Abyssinia and India, if this were in 1736, he would have been born in 1716//7, not 1712 as widely accepted. But his theory derives from the erroneous identification of Arut'in/Sayat'-Nova with the tamburist Küçük Arutin of Istanbul, who was in Persia from 1736-42 as a member of a diplomatic mission from the Sublime Porte to the court of Nadir Shah.³⁹ In any case, on the evidence of the Azeri autobiography, whence one could conclude that his public performances began at the age of 25, and his annotation to *Shat sirun is*, which places his maturity as a musician at the age of 30, he was extremely unlikely to have been a member of Irakli's entourage at such an early date. However, *Lehrjahre Wanderjahre*, say the Germans, who still know *Lehrlinge*, *Gesellen*, and *Meister*, and there is no reason *a priori* why the young craftsman, with a love of music, poetry and romance, should not, like many other Armenians of all times (one thinks of the 'Armenoid' wine-sellers portrayed in Chinese figurines of the T'ang Dynasty, A.D. 618-907), have travelled eastwards and southwards in pursuit of his trade. But that that had anything in particular to do with gold, rubies, porcelain, carpets, etc., one forbears to conclude.

At the age of 25, he says, he enters the *meidan* or public square, half-closing his eyes in rapture. This cannot mean that it is the first time he has crossed a public square, even though he is from the country, and public squares are a characteristic of towns and cities. It could refer to the *meidan* of Tiflis, which he found impressive enough to be compared in an Azeri poem⁴⁰ to his beloved's mole, high praise indeed (though, of course, a hyperbolic jest), but, again, it is doubtful that crossed that for the first time at the age of 25. The verse must refer to his *début* as a public performer, and one who sang with feeling, one who from the age of 18 had become aware of the rose and the rose-garden, i.e. had fallen beneath the charm of the opposite sex. The implication of this in comparison with his serious statement in *Shat sirun is*⁴¹ that he had mastered his three instruments at the age of 30, is that he was not fully mature as a performer at 25, which is in no way unreasonable. At the age of 30, he is writhing like a serpent, probably both in the pangs of love, and in rapturous performance: he was playing *impassionato*, as was expected of an

³⁹ See below, p. 287, n. 140.

⁴⁰ In *Ager nazlu yarun khali dêirsan*, T p. 50 (a), H (Azeri no. 3, p. 138, st. 4, v. 1).

⁴¹ See above, Chapter One, p. 12, n. 41.

ashugh (and often, as many of his poems reveal, with sincerity). At 35 he is writing well, biding his time, looking to the main chance, putting his hopes in the future. At 40, he says, all his possessions have gone, washed away by the sea.

The figure 40 has a special place in the numerology of the East. It rained on the Ark for forty days and forty nights. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. David reigned for forty years. Jesus was tempted of the Devil for forty days. Ali Baba knew forty thieves. The Persian chandelier has forty lamps. The Turkish chandler has forty bins. When the Turk says *kırk*, or the Frenchman *trente-six*, no-one starts to count. The figure is large enough for the Oriental to be impressive. He does not need to conceive hundreds and thousands. The Persian and Turkish centipedes have forty feet. The figure has a mystic dimension. Mount Lebanon has forty saints. At burials the mourners take forty steps back, and forty steps forward. The Russians pray for forty days for the soul of the departed (*sorokust'e*). In a far distant part of the world, among the Bantus of East Africa, this all-embracing figure is known, though one might suspect Arab influence.⁴² The figure is thus highly enigmatic and ambiguous, and Sayat'-Nova is not one to disappoint us in this domain. The account of his 40's in the *Sujut'lama* leads us into computations with numbers that whirl and combine and dissolve like those on a roulette wheel. One seeks a pattern, a system, but the mere mathematician is lost. Those who seek clues to the poet's biography must content themselves with possibilities, probabilities, and approximations that are the essence of the mysterious forties.

Much could hang on the verse concerning the poet's 40th year. When, however, did he compose it? The date of his birth, usually accepted as 1712, is only approximate, based mainly on the fact that he says his maturity as a musician came with his thirtieth year, and the fact that of his poems that are dated the earliest is of 1742, which is no guarantee that it was the first.⁴³ The date of his birth, therefore, is the first imponderable. Then the *Sujut'lama* bears two dates: 1750 immediately

⁴² 'Forty tongues, forty spears', Suaheli proverb, *cit.* Eva Lips, *Weisheit zwischen Eis und Urwald — Vom Humor der Naturvölker*, Leipzig, 1959, p. 232 (quoting either from E. Damman or C. Velten, refs. pp. 295, 298). 'Geduld ist der Schlüssel des Trostes' (Patience is the key to comfort), *cit. ibid.*, cf. AP *aş-şabru miftâhu'l-fakhr* 'Patience is the key of glory' (S), points to Arab influence. 'Die Welt ist ein morscher Baum, stütze dich nicht darauf!' (The world is a rotten tree, do not support yourself on it), *ibid.*, would have a particular appeal for Sayat'-Nova.

⁴³ See above, Chapter One, p. 32 n. 111.

following on the text of the poem, and 1753 in the margin on the preceding page. One can be sure only that these annotations were made by 1765/6, the date in the colophon of the *Tetrak* which contains them. Which, if either, if not both, can one trust? Both are specific as to the day and month (3rd January 1750 and 6th August 1753), and both appear to have been written by the same hand, that which transcribed the whole poem. Instinct prompts one to opt for 1750 as the surer, in that it does follow immediately after the text, while that of 1753, being written in the margin, looks like an afterthought, a later addition. It would be possible, as noted above, to accept both dates as genuine, that of 1750 referring to the composition of the poem, that of 1753 to its recital (the word *nat'k'omi* 'said, recited' appears only in the 1753 annotation). If the poem were composed in 1750 by a poet born in 1712, he would have been 37 or 38, so that any reference to his 40th year would not be factual, and his ruin only a (perhaps humorous) rueful prognosis. If the poem were composed in 1753, when the poet, again if born in 1712, would have been 40 or 41, a different picture emerges. On his younger son Ioane's evidence, in 1751 Sayat'-Nova had experienced trouble while in the service of a Georgian prince (not said to be the source of it), and the text of the poem annotated implies it was from someone who had the faint aura of a star, probably a courtier, proud bearer of some order or other.⁴⁴ Hasrat'yan considers it beyond any doubt that in 1752-53 Sayat'-Nova incurred the displeasure of Irakli, king of Kakhet'i, and was banished from the court at T'elavi,⁴⁵ that is, when the poet would have been between 39 and 41. One has the uneasy feeling that the verse concerning the poet's 40th year in the *Sujut'lama* has been much juggled with, perhaps subliminally. The Armenian ode *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun* is 'You are eminently wise', urging its recipient, referred to as a king, possibly Irakli, not to listen to the poet's detractors, bears in Hasrat'yan's edition the annotation that it was made in 441 of the chronicon, i.e. 1753, though no such annotation is in Ioane's manuscript, and the poem is not included in the *Tetrak*.⁴⁶ There might seem to be little point in the poet's saying that he was ruined at the age of 40 if this had no foundation in fact at all, and that it was just such a circumstance that might well prompt the composition of a retrospective and prospective

⁴⁴ I fol. 16A; see above, p. 63 n. 33.

⁴⁵ H p. xxvii; another reference to a 2-3 year gap interruption in the poet's acceptance at court is made on p. xxv.

⁴⁶ H (Arm.) no. 10, p. 20, and p. 237.

autobiographical poem. On the other hand, as has been said above, it does not seem to be completely serious, and does not show Sayat'-Nova in the most depressive mood expressed in his verse. But perhaps he had in fact suffered a setback, but, at an age when he could be confident of his artistic maturity, determined to oppose the slings and arrows of misfortune. Certainly his defiant retort to his critics in 1751, 'When I say my word, the heavens will roll with thunder', does not betoken a faint heart.

The enigmas concerning his 40's continue in the next verse devoted to his 45th year, which, if born in 1712, he would not have reached, and which has the vague feel of futurity. What it means exactly is, of course, not likely to be crystal clear. If ever there was a *symboliste avant le fait* ... (though one must remember that such poetic methods were common in the East and in Europe long before Rimbaud and Mallarmé). What is implied by the statement that he is informed or aware (Ar.Pers. and Tk. *khbardâr* 'having news, information') of every affair? T.Az. *ish* is wondrously polysemous, a word made for the master of *igavil/tejnîs/qarahijâ/trobar clus* that Sayat'-Nova prided himself to be. Redhouse gives the meanings 'work, business, affair, matter, workmanship, an occult matter, good quality, use, benefit, profit, state, condition, the sac or envelope of a foetus'. For Azeri Äzizbâj gives 'work, affair, occupation, undertaking', and with various verbs 'unpleasant business, unpleasant affair, difficulties, cares, difficult situation' (in Russian). It could therefore be as a businessman that the poet became aware of deals to be made, though unlikely in the context. Or, as a minstrel, of developments offering possibilities for advancement in his career, too innocent an interpretation in the pessimistic context. Phrases like T *iş var* 'there is work (to be done)' and also 'there is some mystery in this', *ânda bir iş var* 'there is some work there' and also 'there is some mystery in this' (R), i.e. 'something's afoot', prompt us to consider the darker meanings. In Azeri *ish* is also used to denote a court case: *ishä bakhmaq* 'to hear a case in court', *ish käsilmäk* 'be condemned' (Ä), 'lose one's case'. The Azeri expressions *ishä düshmäk* 'fall into an unpleasant affair, into misfortune', *ishä qoymak* 'cause worries, cares, place in a difficult situation', *ish chikhartmaq* 'make difficulties' (Ä), would not have failed to occur to Sayat'-Nova's audience. The meaning must be, 'I am informed of every bad business (in which I myself am held to be involved)'. Even *khbardâr* need not be innocent: it could mean 'he who holds the news', i.e. 'he who is the subject of the news or gossip (concerning every bit of

bad business)', parallel to Shakespeare's 'thence it comes that my name receives a brand' (*Sonnet* 111).

The poet's reference to his 50th year, when, he says, 'disgrace is stamped upon my face', is strikingly reminiscent of *Sonnet* 112 of Shakespeare, himself the object of adverse criticism, which complains of 'th'impression ... which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow'. The verse seems also to be remarkably prophetic, since we know from the evidence of his dated poems that in 1759, for reasons that will be discussed below, he was involved in a scandal, probably of a romantic nature, that led to his dismissal from the Georgian court. In 1759, if, again, the date of his birth at 1712 is accurate, he would have been 46 or 47, and in 1760/1, when he was in exile as a parish priest at Kakhi 90 m. from Tiflis, he would have been between 47 and 49, that is, not yet 50. And yet, in a poem dated 1750 and/or 1753, he seems to know exactly what his fate would actually be at that age. It is possible that he had a premonition, from the way things were going in his life, that he would suffer a setback. But if one finds prophecy hard to take, one has three choices. Either he had already attained the age of 50 by 1750, which would put back the in any case national date of his birth a decade, ca. 1700; or the dates of 1750 and 1753 attached to the poem in the *Tetrak* are inaccurate; or that amendments based on hindsight were made to the 1750 or 1753 poem when it came to be copied in 1765/6. One would be fully justified, however, in refusing to draw any far-reaching conclusions based upon the *Sujut'lama*. At least, until there is proof to the contrary, the date of 1712 for the poet's birth may stand.

If there is one statement in the poem for the authenticity of which one would take an oath, it is that by his 55th year the poet, the author of so many passionate laments and complaints, had uttered many a plaintive sigh.

The rest of the poem is imaginative. Though he probably reached his 80's, it is unlikely that he reached the 85th year and its sickness of the soul. If he was martyred in 1795, he was ca. 83. If one sets store by the so-called Georgian evidence that he died in 1801, he probably did not see his 90th year, to grow fed up with himself. To contemplate the attainment of one's 95th year, when many would be more than contented with the canonical three score and ten, displays a meticulous readiness to face any contingency, and possibly a belief on the part of Sayat'-Nova in his own vitality, which no-one would deny him.

That the very name of Sayat'-Nova should be problematic is no more than one might expect of a poet so demonstrably devoted to multilingual

puns and allegories, one who literally rejoiced that his thoughts were inaccessible to the many ('Every man cannot read (me), my writing is of another script').⁴⁷ We know for sure only that his first Christian name, that appended as an annotation to many poems in Georgian script in his son Ioane's manuscript and the *Tetrak*, was Arut'in, i.e. in more Classical Armenian form, *Yarut'iwn* (Harut'iun), i.e. 'Anastasius', and that in the colophon to a manuscript he copied in 1766 as a monk the religious name he was given was Step'anos.⁴⁸ The name by which he signs himself in the final verses of his poems, his *makhlaş*, that by which the world knows him, but which he nowhere explains, not by so much as a hint, *Sayat'-Nova*, has been given many different interpretations. Hasrat'yan, following some unverifiable tradition or theory, writes that *Sayad* was 'perhaps' the name of his paternal grandfather,⁴⁹ but the poet has given us, in the said colophon, referring to himself as 'this sinful Step'anos k'ayhanay whom they call Saead (i.e. *Sayad*) Novay', only the names of his father 'the pilgrim (to Jerusalem, *mahtesi*) Karapet' and his mother Sarra or Sařa. Taking *Sayat'* to be the name of his grandfather, some have interpreted *Sayat'-Nova* as **Sayad-neva*, i.e. the latter element as PT *neva*, Az. *nävä*, 'grandchild', thus the simple equivalent of an Armenian surname 'Sayadean',⁵⁰ although it is most improbable that an Armenian peasant family in the 18th century would have had a surname at all. The vocalisation of *Nova*, sometimes written *Noa*, dismisses that theory in any case. In Azeri poems in Armenian script in the *Tetrak* the name is written *sayiat' nôva(y)*,⁵¹ and in virtually all poems in Georgian script as *saiat'nova*. It is possible, as Hasrat'yan thought, that the *t'* of the latter forms represent a dialectal devoicing of final *-d*, as in *mart'* and *vart'* that occur in Georgian script for *mard* and *vard* (though in at least one Armenian poem in Georgian script *mard*, *vard*, and *dard*

⁴⁷ *Amen mart' ch'i kana kart'a, im girën urish gërën e*, in *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is*, v. 14, H p. 20.

⁴⁸ Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, fol. 276v (cf. also notices on foll. 1r, 47v, 100v, 170v), reproduced in the facsimile of the *Tetrak* edited by B.L. Ch'ukaszian and P.P. Muradyan as an Appendix, fol. (143).

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. vii. It is of some relevance that the name of the sound engineer of Parajanov's film *Nřan guynë* (The Colour of Pomegranates) is Yu. Sayadyan, which shows that the surname is current. Whether the engineer is related to Sayat'-Nova, whose descendants used the names *Sayat'nentz'* and *Sayat'-Nova* (see above, p. 28 n. 99) has not been researched.

⁵⁰ Preferred by Gaysaryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12, where other fanciful etymologies are listed and rejected.

⁵¹ E.g. p. 25, 4th line from bottom, p. 33, 5th l.f.b., p. 34, 3rd l.f.b.

are written with final *-d*).⁵² The fact that the poet has written his pseudonym with a final *-d* means that the form *sayad* has to be taken seriously, and it has indeed led to the interpretation of *Sayat'-Nova* as Persian **sayyâd-i navâ* 'hunter of song' (PT *navâ*, *nevâ* i.a. 'voice, sound, song'), the view favoured by Hasrat'yan.⁵³ In fact, in one Azeri enigmatic poem (*qaraheja*) written in Georgian script, the word for 'hunter' and the first element of the pseudonym are written identically: *saiad olan t'orin qurmish t'ar tut'ar ... saiadnoa sal ustada rahmat'in* 'he who is a hunter spreads his net and places a (birdlimed) twig ... Saiadnoa, arrange a "(Lord have) mercy" for the Master'.⁵⁴ But this may be no more than an off-the-cuff pun on the part of our notorious punster, of no more significance for the interpretation of his pseudonym than the possible play on *sait'* 'whither?', represented as emanating from mockers in *Qvela meubneba*, *Ha saiat'nova / sait' mikhval, ch'emken mo, saiat'nova* 'Everyone says to me, Ho there, Sayat'-Nova! Where are you going? Come to me, Sayat'-Nova!'⁵⁵ Moreover, the objection that leads Hasrat'yan to reject the 'grandson of Sayad' interpretation, on the grounds that *nâvâ* would in Armenian be written and pronounced *nêvê* (actually experience of Azeri in Armenian and Georgian script shows that it would be written *nava* — but in any case not *nova*) applies equally to his favoured interpretation: the vocalisation is wrong for PT *navâ*. And the concept 'Hunter of songs' is not far short of ridiculous — though whether that in itself is a disqualification is a moot point.

The Arabic aspect of *Sayat'* must have occupied the minds of the poet's Muslim contemporaries and those familiar with their languages as much as it has modern researchers, perhaps sometimes to his amusement, sometimes not. A connection with APT سَيِّد *sayyid* 'lord, master' (which has led some to interpret the full name as 'Lord of Song') he would have found flattering; it is probably the idea that his son Ioane meant to convey in using as his Russian surname the form *Seidov*. A connection with the phonetically virtually identical سَيِّئَة *saiyi'at* 'sin, wickedness, crime' would probably have been one pun that Sayat'-Nova

⁵² T p. 109, H p. 25.

⁵³ P. xv, where he appeals also to Arabic; but although the construct from **sayyâd nawâ* would be closer to the Armenian name, *nawâ* does not occur in Arabic, a language that SN is in any case not known to have known.

⁵⁴ *Hamasha ashughlar*, st. 4 v. 3, st. 5 v. 4, T p. 87.

⁵⁵ *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, st. 5 vv. 3-4, B p. 22; I fol. 9 omits v. 4, and accordingly the possible pun.

would not have appreciated, though it may have occurred to someone at the Georgian court in 1759. I think it most likely that, perhaps as a pun on the after all possible family name *Sayad*, the poet was thinking of APT ساعة *sâ'at* 'time, interval or space of time, an hour, a clock, any instrument for measuring time, the time of day' (Redhouse), especially in connection with *nova*, which one might interpret as the Russian feminine adjective *nova* 'new'. In any Armenian rendering of the Arabic word the laryngal -ع- -ʿ- would have to be modified or omitted, as also in Turkish, Persian, and Georgian, in which languages it is zero or a slight glottal stop resulting in a hiatus between two *a*'s: T.Az. *saat*, P. *saat*, Grg. *saat'-i*. Armenian nowhere tolerates such an hiatus, but the group -aya- is well attested (*kayan*, *saya*, *hayasēr*, *layak'*, etc.). Moreover, several words in his Armenian colophons of 1760/1 and 1765/6 suggest that for the poet the graphe *ay* was no more than a (perhaps broad) *a*: e.g. *k'ayanay*, *k'ayhanay* (beside *k'ahanyeay-*) for his own ecclesiastical rank, written, once, correctly as *k'ahanay*; *meghaypart* for *meghapart*; *zhamayg(i)rk'* for *zhamagirk'*.⁵⁶ It is possible that this is a purely 'orthographic', non-phonetic, error induced by the fact that the termination -ay (in the loanword *k'ahanay* in particular representing Syriac aleph emphaticus *â*) and in Armenian verbal forms ending in -ay is traditionally, and certainly since the medieval period, pronounced as a simple *a* (one may note in his colophons the natural mistake of writing *yisheay* for the correct *yishea*, due to the same phenomenon). It does not seem very strange, therefore, that the poet should render the Arabic word, already simplified in the Muslim languages surrounding him, as *sayat'*. The word is sometimes written in Armenian texts, and in the Armenian surname *Sahat'jyan* ('Clockmaker'), parallel to the occasional Persian practice of rendering ع ʿ by *h*, as *sahat'*. This -*h*- *Sayat'-Nova* would also have ignored, as in his form *k'ayana*, which could be an exact parallel, and in *musayib* for Az. *müsaḥib*, though in this case the -y anticipates the following *i*.⁵⁷ Thus, in a construction that anticipates Esperanto (the poet flourished more than one and a half centuries before Zamenhof's invention), *Sayat' Nôva* — Arabic *sâ'at* is feminine — probably means 'New Time'. *nôva* is not, as one might have expected, Persian, which for this posited Indo-European concept has ن nau, nav, nu, no, borrowed into Turkish as *nev*. *Sayat'-Nova* uses the form *nôv*, as

⁵⁶ See the quotations from these colophons above, p. 23.

⁵⁷ *Bir yar bir musayib* 'The one beloved is a companion', T p. 60.

in his Azeri didactic poem *Nôv k'esalar* 'Upstarts'.⁵⁸ The geographically and morphologically nearest equivalent is the Russian short form feminine adjective *nova*.

Any moderately informed and observant inhabitant of the Caucasus in the 18th century would have been aware of the growing influence of Russia in all directions. Sayat'-Nova was born during the reign of Peter the Great, circa three years after his victory at Poltava in 1709. He lived at a time when the Caucasus was plagued by the rivalry of the Muslim powers of Turkey and Persia, and he was the son of an Armenian who in all probability because of religious and economic persecution had been driven from Aleppo.⁵⁹ Many Georgian and Armenian Christians saw their salvation in Europe, and Russia in particular, the ties between the Georgian monarchy and Russia becoming ever closer. But there is no need to speculate as to whether Sayat'-Nova might or might not have come sufficiently into contact with Russians to learn their word for 'new': he himself wrote six poems in Russian, preserved in Ioane's manuscript, and they include that very word in a phrase that echoes our proposed etymology of his name. As written in Ioane's Cyrillic, the text is illiterate, beyond all useful emendation:

вам доложу история ушлишити господа
скажица прежде неб(ы)ль зачильки нови мода⁶⁰

which is probably intended to mean

'I shall tell you a story. Listen, gentlemen.
Something never before known will be said, twitterings in a new mode'.

The would-be couplet does not rhyme because of the poet's faulty ideas of Russian stress accent, and the piece has no literary merit, although it shows Sayat'-Nova in his rare facetious mood, such as that which inspired his Georgian satirical verses against the Catholicos Anton. But, however ungrammatical, it is the 'new mode' (**novaya moda*) referred to that is of greater interest. In form Sayat'-Nova's verse is largely in the tradition of Persian and Turkish poetry, thus hardly a new fashion. But in his social comments, deriving directly from his dealings with the Georgian king and the nobles of his court, he is clearly one who is discontented with the present, a progressive who hopes for a better future. As he says in his important 1758 Azeri poem *Olam ayagha bait'ursun* 'Let Death trample me underfoot':

⁵⁸ Ioane, fol. 32r, T p. 81.

⁵⁹ See H pp. vii-ix.

⁶⁰ I fol. 53r.

*gech'an gunlar iada gelimaz, geruma ialvaruram*⁶¹

'Passing days are not remembered, I beseech (appeal to) that which comes after me'

Not that his faith in the future never wavered. Philosophical consistency is not to be expected from a lyric poet, a prey to moods and ups and downs. In his Armenian ode of 1759, admittedly a very bad year in his life, *Ashkarēs me p'anjara ê* 'This world is a cage', he complains

*Erek' lav er k'anz esor, vagherumen bezaril im*⁶²

'Yesterday was better than today, I am fed up with tomorrows'

But the poet's yearning for better things to come was instinctively felt by the Russian poet Ya. P. Polonski, who became acquainted with the work of Sayat'-Nova in Tiflis, and in 1851, a year before the first edition of 46 of the minstrel's songs by G. Akhverdian in Moscow in 1852, translated some of the poems and wrote an article on their author in the journal *Kavkaz*. 'For his time', he wrote, 'for Tiflis, fallen into decrepitude under the yoke of Mohammedan rule, Sayat'-Nova was a most heartening exception. One cannot but feel how much this man must have suffered by being so superior to his contemporaries'. Apart from this fulsome praise, Polonski was inspired to compose a poem in the spirit of the Armenian singer, entitled 'Sayat-Nova', in which he foresees the 'New Time' (новое время) and the poets who will come after him.

Много песков поглощают моря, унося их волнами,
Но берега их сыпучими вечно покрыты песками.
Много и песен умчит навсегда невозвратное время, —
Новые встанут певцы, и услышит их новое время.
Если погибну я, знаю, что мир мои песни забудет;
Но для тебя, нежный друг мой, другого певца уж не будет...⁶³

'The seas will swallow up many grains of sand, bearing them away on their waves,

But by the surging of the waves the seashores are eternally covered in sand.
Many will be the grains of sand wafted by the time forever beyond recall.
New singers will arise, and a new time will listen to them.
Should I perish, I know that the world will forget my songs,
But for you, my dearest friend, there will be no other singer.'

⁶¹ Т p. 38 (in Georgian script).

⁶² I fol. 63A; Т p. 133; Н p. 70.

⁶³ Gaysaryan, p. 61.

This is in the spirit of the Sayat'-Nova who could sing

*K'ani guze k'amin tane, tsovenen avaz ch'i paksi.
T'eguz ėlim, t'eguz ch'ėlim, mejlisnerun saz ch'i paksi.
T'e ku paksim, k'iz ku paksim, ashkharis me maz ch'i paksi.*

'However much the wind blows away, the sea will never want for sand.
Whether I am there or not, the court will not want for lutes.
If I am missing, missing for you, this world will not lack (so much as) a hair.'

But not in the spirit of him who, in the same poem, could declare

Buniat'ės avaz ch'ımanas, k'arap' ê, k'arukěrên ê.⁶⁴

'Do not think my essence but sand, it is rock, it is of stone.'

Sayat'-Nova felt himself to be a link between two worlds. In the satirical Georgian piece addressed to Mzechabuk Orbeliani, he says 'We have built a bridge across the Araxes' (*Aragvis gavsdvat' khidia*),⁶⁵ perhaps referring to the cultural link he had established between Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaidjan. His Azeri poem on the old master bridge-builder supposes him — himself — bridging the present and the future, and looking to others to continue the task:

*Rahmat' p'ir ustada k'orp'i t'ik'ana.
Ot'an t'amalina bir tash duzeir.⁶⁶*

'(The Lord have) mercy upon the old master building his bridge.
May the passer-by add a stone to its foundation.'

The world has not forgotten Sayat'-Nova, and two hundred years after his death a New Time has come. One can be sure he would still long for better.

⁶⁴ *Dun ên gėłkhên imastun is*, vv. 17-19, 15, H p. 20.

⁶⁵ B p. 31. Cf. the alphabetically macaronic poem *Dard mi ani*, above Chapter One, p. 12 n. 32.

⁶⁶ I fol. 31A; T p. 43.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COURT MINSTREL AND A DARK LADY?

Although not as firm as the evidence established on the basis of the colophons written by Sayat'-Nova's own hand and the annotations to his poems by his son Ioane, but certainly stronger than the imaginative travelogue of Khelashvili and the poet's symbolic 'autobiography', are the biographical data that may be deduced, with caution, from the poems themselves. These show that his career as a minstrel was clearly linked, in his own mind at least, to Irakli II:

*Sayat'novas khelmtsip'e qen-shahbazi Iraklia*¹

'Sayat'-Nova's sovereign is Irakli, the royal-falcon prince'

*Sak'art'velos mep'is sazandari var*²

'I am the minstrel of the King of Georgia.'

Hasrat'yan is sure that 'singer remained in the palace (at T'elavi and particularly at Tiflis) from 1744 until at least the summer or autumn of 1759', with an interruption of two to three years, probably 1762-63'.³ But this is far from sure. We have seen that the two Georgian princes named as Sayat'-Nova's sponsors, masters, or employers were 'Gurgen Khan'/Prince Giorgi, and Prince Vakhtang, according to his own verse and the note of Prince T'eimurazi, and his own son Ioane respectively. There is no evidence, apart from the Georgian verses above, which may be poetic licence or the product of wishful thinking, that he was the protégé of King Irakli. And Irakli, from 1744 to 1762, thus beyond the end of Sayat'-Nova's career as poet and musician, was king of Kakhet'i, at T'elavi, north-east of the River Kur. It was not until the death of his father T'eimurazi II in 1762 that Irakli, as Irakli II, became also King of K'art'li, with his court at Tiflis. This capital city has no special place in Sayat'-Nova's verse, being mentioned only once, in a satirical comparison with his mistress's mole.⁴ The Armenian singer of Tiflis par

¹ In *Baghi bulbulit' avsila* 'The garden is full of nightingales', I fol. 2A, ed. B p. 14.

² In *Damijere* 'Judge me', I fol. 14A, ed. B p. 10.

³ H p. xxv.

⁴ T p. 50, H p. 139; below, p. 324.

excellence was his predecessor Naghash Hovnat'an (1661-1722), the author of the poem *On the Beautiful Women of Georgia*, which begins

*Govem srtiv urakhakan
T'ifliz k'aghak'n patvakan.
Khist geghetz'ik en sirakan
Vërastanay gozalnern,
Vërastanay gozalnern,
Gurjastanay khat'unnern.*⁵

'Let me praise with merry heart
The honourable city of Tiflis.
Wondrous fair are the lovely
Beauties of the Georgian land,
Beauties of the Georgian land,
The ladies of Gurjistan.'

This poet's description of the *mejlis* or court assembly in the Georgian capital is not without relevance to Sayat'-Nova's own milieu:

*Mejlis nësten sazov-damov,
Lezun k'aghtz'ër, khôsk'ën hamov,
Gini khëmen oskê jamov,
Vërastanay armaghannern,
Vërastanay armaghannern,
Shên T'iflizu t'avadnern.*⁶

'They sit at court to (the sound of) saz and drone,
Sweet of tongue, fragrant of speech.
Wine they drink from a golden beaker,
(God's) gift to Georgia,
(God's) gift to Georgia,
The nobles of Tiflis the prosperous.'

Gaysaryan, in a hot flush of enthusiasm that is unfortunately typical of most Soviet scholarship, writes: 'Contemporary with the life and work of Sayat'-Nova, T'bilisi, the capital of Georgia, plays a prominent rôle as the commercial and cultural centre of the whole of Transcaucasia ... Here to the sound of the *saz*, the *ch'ongur*, and the *k'amanch'a* rang out

⁵ *Tagh i veray Gurjastanay gozalnerin*, Naghash Hovat'an, *Tagher*, ed. A. Mnatz'akanyan, Erevan, 1983, pp. 19-22, st. 1. The poem consists of 11 sextains. Many of the features in this poet's description of Georgian beauties (he uses the Azeri word *gozal*, properly *gözäl*) coincide with those of SN: face like the rose or the full moon, eyebrows penned in an arch (*ghalam unk'er kapats kamar*), eyes shining like the sun, dressed in fine linen and silk. But SN never says they walk like peacocks (*siramrgi nman k'aylin*, st. 8), or refers to their double chin (*siptak bukhakh*, st. 2).

⁶ *Ibid.*, st. 7, p. 21.

the songs of the famous *ashugh*.⁷ It is, however, far from certain that Sayat'-Nova ever performed at the Tiflis court. It is, however, not improbable. The two kings, father and son, at Tiflis and T'elavi respectively, were ever close, be it as fighters in the cause of Nadir Shah of Persia prior to their virtually joint coronation, in his gift, in 1744, and in campaigns against the petty Muslim and Lezghian pretenders who, after Nadir Shah's murder in 1747, terrorised Erevan, Ganja, and Qarabagh, be it in diplomatic approaches to the Russians, in particular T'eimurazi's mission to Catherine the Great at St. Petersburg in 1760, approved by Irakli.⁸ Relations between the courts of Tiflis and T'elavi could not have been other than intimate, and neither is likely to have kept an outstanding musician and poet, with a useful flair for occasional verse, as their great-grandson and grandson T'eimurazi knew him to be, one in the retinue of their grandson and son Giorgi,⁹ from the dilectation of the other. It cannot, however, be without significance that the poet never refers in his verse to King T'eimurazi, but only to Irakli.

Sayat'-Nova's Royal Command Performances would have been principally, if not indeed wholly, at the *mejlis* or official assembly, at which, as Naghash Hovnat'an has recorded, minstrels played, held at T'elavi. It is not known when exactly Sayat'-Nova first performed before Irakli. Hasrat'yan assumes that he became a royal appointee, *palatakan ergich* 'palace cantor', immediately upon Irakli's coronation in 1744. On the basis of two verses in the Georgian poem, almost certainly an occasional piece, *The garden is full of nightingales*, mentioned above,¹⁰ Hasrat'yan suggests that the poet performed at the marriage of Irakli's sister Ana to Prince Demetre Orbeliani at Tiflis, which coincided with Irakli's father's coronation as King of K'art'li on 9th/20th June 1744:¹¹

⁷ Gaysaryan, p. 16. The *saz*, as a particular musical instrument, is not mentioned by the poet as one in which he was proficient. *saz* is used by SN in its Persian sense of 'musical instrument in general'.

⁸ See Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-206.

⁹ See above, Chapter One, p. 15 n. 52.

¹⁰ N. 1.

¹¹ P. 259, note to Georgian poem no. 6, where the date of T'eimurazi's daughter and Irakli's younger sister Ana is dated to the early years of the 1720's. Tradition has linked her, in her widowhood and in her fifties with the Georgian poet Besiki, a younger contemporary of Sayat'-Nova, 1750-1791, thus born before and deceased after him, who wrote a love poem entitled *Dedop'als Anazed* 'On Queen Ana', either dedicated to her and/or her daughter Ana Orbeliani, the adolescent bride of Solomon I of Imeret'i (see

*Khelmtsip'esatz' ar uk'nia Rostom-Zalisat'vina
nishnoba da k'ortsilitz'a t'avisi k'alisat'vina*¹²

'Even the Emperor (of Persia) did not arrange for Rustam son of Zal
Such a betrothal and wedding for his own daughter.'

This is the poem that concludes with the *makhlas* quoted above, to the effect that Sayat'-Nova's sovereign was the royal-falcon prince Irakli.¹³ In view of the importance that attaches to this poem, it will not be out of place to quote it here in full — and an Ode to Georgian Nightingales could be a welcome interlude in an account that hitherto has been largely a sea of facts and a morass of hypotheses.

*Baghi bulbulit' avsila. vards awazi^a ar akliā.
ganp'enila^b ia vardi, zed lamazi ar akliā.
up'ro^c kharobs iasamani^d, dzirs arazi^e ar akliā.
tsminda sant'lebi shamdanshi, zirandazi ar akliā^f.
meidani gamart'ulia^g, kandirbazi ar akliā.
ar^h getsqinos, ch'emo kargo, sitqvashiaⁱ igavi mak'vs.
romel ert'j genatz'valo, netar^k ramdeni t'avi mak'vs.
mudam shens^l samsakhurshi var, ara st'k'va piri shavi mak'vs.
amagham ch'vensa mobrdzani^m, ert'i kaiⁿ ambavi mak'vs.
sul k'veqana ch'vensa aris, rom bazazi ar akliā!*

^a I; B *varḡsa razi*.

^b I; B *ats dashvenda*.

^c I; B *utz'khod*.

^d I; B *asamini* (?).

^e I; B *dzils sarazi* (?).

^f B; I places this as v. 15, omitting a verse from his st. 1. See translation, note ^c.

^g I; B *gamart'uli*, leaving first hemistich one syllable short.

^h B; I *nu*.

ⁱ I; B *sitqvashiatz'*.

^j I; B *ert'khel*.

^k I; B *gana*.

^l B; I *qovelt'vis sheni*.

^m I; B *mobrdzandi*.

ⁿ I; B *kargi*.

D. Rayfield, *The literature of Georgia*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994, p. 123). Although the title of *dedop'ali* may be used here as a flattering courtesy title in the sense of *souveraine*, *Gebieterin* (Orbeliani's wife was after all a Princess Royal), the normal senses of 'queen' and 'bride' would better suit Solomon's young bride.

¹² St. 4, vv. 1-2, B p. 14; as seen below, I's order differs.

¹³ N. 1.

rakhan sop'els ase mosdevs^o, ulkhenot' ar^p ik'neba.
sheni k'eba, sheni khvetsna^a uenot' aghar^r ik'neba.
maranisa tumbo savse udenot'atz' ar ik'neba^s.
mejliishi gamart'ulia^t, ushenot' atz'^u ar ik'neba.
trialebs ok'ros t'asebi, leilis^v nazi ar akliaw.

khelmtsip'e ar uk'nia t'avisa k'alisat'vina^w
nishnoba da k'ortsilitz'a^y rostomis zalissat'vina^z.
ratz' rom gadamkhda t'avzeda, sul im maghalissat'vina.
neisa^{aa} k'amanch'isa daovl^{bb} -qavalissat'vina.
gars uskhedan momgheralni, sant'ur sazi ar akliacc.

turp'a tani lertsams gigavs, mort' ul t'irma shalshi(a)^{dd}.
kbilebi margalitshia^{ee}, indis pilpili khalshia.
p'alevant'a momrevi khar, nak'ebi rostom-zalshia^{ff}.
t'u ch'vens ar mobdzandebi, tsavidet' samart' alshia.
saiat' novasi^{gg} khelmtsip'e qen-shahbazi^{hh} iraklia.

'The garden has filled with Nightingales, there is no lack of voices for the Rose^a.

The violet and the rose have blossomed^b, there is no lack of beauty upon them.
 The lilac rejoices abundantly^c, on the ground there is no lack of rugs^d.

^o B; I *ase mozdevs*.

^p I; B *da dideba*.

^r I; B *uenot'atz' ar*.

^s B; I om., reducing the required quintain to a quatrain.

^t Slightly amended from *I mejnishi gamart'ulia*; B *t'u mejlisi mort'ulia* (for *mart'ulia*).

^u B; I *usheneba*.

^v I; B *leilum* (?).

^w B; I has in this place v. 4 of st. 1 above, placing this verse of B as v. 5 of I st. 4.

^x I; B *rostom-zaalissat'vina* (the double *-aa-* of *zaal* is doubtless an editorial emendation to achieve the required octosyllabic hemistich: it is not a known device of the poet himself to represent P -â—).

^y B; I *kai k'ortsili*.

^z I; B *t'avisi k'alisat'vina* (for *t'avisa ...*)

^{aa} I; B *leilumis* (?).

^{bb} I; B *doul-*.

^{cc} B; I omits, having it its place v. 4 of st. 3 above (see note o).

^{dd} I; B *mort'ulkhar k'irmanshalshia*.

^{ee} I; B *margalitshi gak'vs*.

^{ff} B; I *narch'evi khar iaqunshi* (for *iaqundshi*) *almashia* (for *almasshia*) *da lalshia*.

^{gg} I; B *sayat'novas* (leaving hemistich one syllable short).

^{hh} B; I *shabazi* (leaving hemistich one syllable short).

^a PT *âwâz* 'voice, sound, fame'; B 'secret, mystery, colour', PT *râz*. H renders 'there is no lack of *vard-gulgaz*, in his Glossary defining *gulgaz* as a 'red colour', but whence?

^b I 'have spread out'; B 'now have adorned themselves'.

^c I *iasamani* 'lilac (*Syringa*)' (Tschenkeli), B (wrongly) *asamini* (?). I *up'ro* 'more'; B *utz'khod* 'strangely', unlikely, though it could refer to artificial decoration or lighting.

^d I *dzirs arazi*, B *dzils sarazi*. *dzirs* 'on the ground', *dzils* 'for sleep'; *arazi*, probably AP *îraz* (اراض) 'carpet of coarse wool or hair' (Steingass); B in his Glossary defines

The holy tapers are on the candelabra, there is no lack of mats^e.
 The main square has been arranged, there is no lack of street-entertainers^f.
 Be not perturbed, my friend^g, I have (set) a riddle in (these) word(s).
 (For every) one (for) which (you say), "My dear fellow (we've guessed it)!"^h, how many more have I!
 I am everⁱ at your service, as long as you do not treat me as one having lost face^j.
 Tonight be our guest, I have one good piece of news.
 The whole world is ours, as long as there is no lack of drapers^k.
 As long as the world such (things) pursues, it will not be devoid of joy.
 Your praise(s) and supplication(s)^l shall not be without a voice^m.
 The siphon in your wine-cellar shall be (ever) full, (never) running dryⁿ.
 Is the *mejlis* (assembly) (well) arranged, it shall never fail to prosper.
 The golden cups pass round, Leila's charm will never be wanting^o.
 The Emperor even never arranged for his own daughter^p
 And Rustahm son of Zâl^q (such) an engagement and wedding.
 What (images) come into the head, just on account of such grandeur!
 On account of the flute (*ney*)^r, the violin (*k'amanch'a*), the drum (*davul*)
 and fife (*qaval*).
 All around the singers sit. Of dulcimer (*sant'ur*) and lute (*saz*) there is no lack.

sarazi as *gadasarazi* but neither form is in Tschenkeli or Meckelein. **dzils arazi* 'carpets for sleep' is just possible, but I's reading is superior.

^e B; I has this as verse 15, leaving his first stanza one verse short. *zirandazi*, PT *zîrandâz* 'something thrown down or under some other thing' (Redhouse), 'the cloth which is spread under a hookah' (Steingass).

^f *k'andirbaz-i* 'fokusnik, shtukar' (Ch': i.e. 'conjurer, three-card-trick man, trickster'), 'Gaukler' (M), not listed by Tsch. Å defines AZ *kândirbaz* (*kândir* 'rope', — P *bâz* 'player' — the word is not listed by S or R) as 'akrobat, kanatokhodetz', i.e. 'tight-rope walker'; cf. Az *kândirini käsmäk* 'cut s.o.'s rope', 'trick s.o.'.

^g Lit. 'my good (one)' (Fr. *mon bon*).

^h Lit. 'saying *genatz'vale* 'may I be a sacrifice for you' (Arm., as Hasrat'yan, *k'ez matagh*), reduced in effect to something like French *je t'en prie!*, German *ich bitte dich!*.

ⁱ B; I 'for everything'.

^j Lit. 'you do not say, I have a black face' (cf. P *siyâh-rû* 'a criminal (from the custom of blacking their faces), unlucky, disgraced', Steingass).

^k *bazazi*, APT *bazzâz* 'cloth-merchant, linen-draper'.

^l I; B 'lauding'.

^m Lit. 'tongueless, dumb'.

ⁿ B; I omits, leaving the quintain again one verse short.

^o In this place Ioane has v. 4, with *shandanshi* for B's more correct *shamdanshi*. The above verse he places as v. 5 of st. 4.

^p I; B Rustahm son of Zal.

^q I; B his own daughter.

^r I; B *leilum-* (?)

Your beautiful body is like a reed, it is wrapped in a (fine) woollen shawl^s.
 Your teeth are like pearls, your mole (black) as an Indian peppercorn^t.
 You are the vanquisher of champions, (your prowess) is like that of the
 lauded Rustahm son of Zâl^u.
 If you do not deign to come to us, we shall appeal to the law.
 The emperor of Sayat'-Nova is the royal-falcon prince Irakli.'

The poem is an excellent example of Sayat'-Nova's occasional verse. The original text, however, cannot be entirely reconstructed, since the versions of Ioane and Baramidze diverge considerably. Ioane, whose prodigious memory of his father's poems was probably helped by personal notes and other sources now lost to us, seems the more trustworthy, as being chronologically closer, in 1823, to their composition, and where possible, his version has been preferred. But he clearly had lapses of memory, omitting two verses entirely, thus making quatrains of original quintains, while one suspects that one verse, st. 5 v. 3, is a trite substitute for a forgotten original. It would, however, be unwise to attach great importance to any verse that is not corroborated by Ioane. Both Ioane and Baramidze do their best to preserve the 8 + 8 syllabic metre, with some lapses. The poem is well-constructed, with a typically elaborate Persian-style rhyme-scheme.

The poem is an epithalamium. The mention of holy tapers, and the comparison with the engagement and wedding of the Shâh's daughter and Rustahm son of Zâl, indicate a royal wedding. After an orthodox but charming prelude, the poet warns his listeners that there is a riddle or two in what he has to say, perhaps referring to the identity of the Emperor's daughter and Rustahm son of Zâl, and the major pun, explained below. His satirical vein comes into play: having emphasised the abundance of rugs and mats for the guests, he gently mocks their rich attire, declaring that all is right with the world so long as there is no lack of drapers (*bazzâz*). This, together with the later mention of the bride wrapped in shawls of the finest wool (PT *tirma*),¹⁴ might serve to

^s I; B you are wrapped in a Kirman shawl.

^t I *lit.* your teeth are in pearl, Indian pepper is in (your) mole; B you have teeth in pearl, Indian pepper is in (your) mole.

^u B *lit.* 'you are the vanquisher of champions/heroes/warriors (P *pahlawân*), it is in the lauded Rustahm (son) of Zâl; I '(for the) rest, you are in sapphire, in diamond and in ruby.'

¹⁴ 'The finest wool woven in pattern like a shawl' (Redhouse); 'figured silk' (Steingass, less reliably).

support the hypothesis that the poet had had something to do with the rag trade. On the other hand, Naghash Hovnat'an, in his ode to the beauties of Tiflis mentioned above, who was an artist by trade (APT *naqqâsh* 'painter, embroiderer, gilder of books, sculptor, carver, engraver, draughtsman', Steingass), specifies as the dress of his Georgian ladies *ghumash* (fine linen), *khara* (watered silk), sable (*samur*), and a silk garment (*valap'ush*) that escaped even Sayat'-Nova's attention.¹⁵ At all events, Sayat'-Nova makes sure that his present profession is not forgotten by emphasising the rôle in the proceedings performed by the players of flute, fiddle, fife and drum (the latter pair being surely the ubiquitous Caucasian *zurna* and *dap*), and the singers, he himself being both instrumentalist and vocalist. The poet does not dwell overlong on the merits of the bride, somewhat cursorily listing her claims to beauty, her reed-like body, her pearly teeth, her mole black as an Indian peppercorn, in two verses of stanza 5. Is there any clue as to the identity of the bridegroom? One may well think there is, and it does not point to Prince Demetre Orbeliani, as Hasrat'yan assumes. The groom is addressed in v. 3 of st. 5 in Baramidze's version as the vanquisher of champion wrestlers and the fellow of Rustahm son of Zâl. In the Armenian ode *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is* 'You are Rustahm (son) of Zâl, king' (*Dun Rostom-i Zal, t'ak'avur*).¹⁶ But Baramidze's verse does not occur in Ioane's version, and must be treated as suspect. And in any case, the comparison with the Persian hero *could* apply to Prince Orbeliani or another. But the poem is indisputably involved with Irakli. Indeed, it is wholly constructed around him, for he is the reason for recurrent refrain of the compound

¹⁵ Arm. lwd. *valay* 'silk textile, wool, veil, undergarment' (Malkhasyantz'): P *vâla*^h 'silk cloth' + P *pôsh* 'mantle, garment', forming a Turkish (**vâla-pôshu*) rather than a Persian (**pôsh-i vâla*^h) *izâfet* compound.

¹⁶ St. 2 v. 1, I fol. 64r, H (Arm.) no. 10, p. 20. Rustahm son of Zâl is mentioned in the Georgian poem *Saqvarlis baghshia chkva damekarga* 'In my beloved's garden I lost my senses': B *rostomis khanjali* (I *zanjili*) *qelt' damachire* 'Rustahm's dagger (I chain, Az. *zânjir*) he pressed to (my) throat' (I fol. 14r, st. 4, v. 2; B p. 40, st. 5, v. 2), H (Georg.) no. 5, p. 101). This could have been a (figuratively) real situation, with Irakli again in the rôle of Rustahm; see below, p. 93. Rustahm is mentioned again in *Zog zogi katz'i* 'One man so, another thus': *sakhishi sheva rostom-zals daitunebs* 'going indoors he criticises Rustahm son of Zal' (B p. 25). Also in the Azeri poems *Bu dunia vaghia dur* 'This world is a dream (accident)'; *bu dunia rostom zalia qalmadi* 'This world did not remain for Rustahm son of Zâl', st. 2 v. 3, T p. 92, H (Az., in Armenian) no. 80, p. 222; *Daria olmish eshkhum ch'alkheir novum* 'My love is tossed as a boat on the sea': *lakht rostom zalaun janglama qalun* 'remain a while as salvation (?) for Rustahm son of Zâl', T. 73, H (Az. in Armenian) no. 81, p. 223. The last three references have nothing in particular to do with Irakli.

rhyme (the *radîf*), occurring nine times, *ar akliā* 'there is no want or lack', which is nothing other than a pun on his name. It would be possible, of course, to interpret this as an indication that the minstrel's ode was Irakli's at first cryptically, then overtly, signed offering to the bride and groom. It seems more likely, however, that it was Sayat'-Nova's eulogy to Irakli as the groom. Irakli was married three times. His second wife was called Ana. As was his sister. And thereby hangs a tale, to be told anon.

One can, therefore, in no way be sure that this epithalium concerns the marriage of Irakli's sister Ana to Prince Demetre Orbeliani in 1744. A better indication of the date of the beginning of Sayat'-Nova's association with Irakli is in the Armenian ode *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a word of supplication to make', which is dated in the *Tetrak* as of the year 446 of the chronicon, i.e. A.D. 1758.¹⁷

Tas tari e man im galis p'adishahi sharip'i pes

'For ten years I have gone around like a noble of the king.'

Ten is a round, and therefore possibly inexact figure. But a master of syllabic verse can count and in his colophon of 1765/6, seven or eight years later, he shows himself much occupied with arithmetic.¹⁸ One might object that *tas* is a metrically required monosyllable, and that 11 (*metasan, tasnewmêk*) or 12 (*erkotasan, tasnerku*) would not fit. But any unit from one to ten, barring two and three, and strictly nine, is monosyllabic in Armenian. It is therefore highly probable that the figure ten in this verse is to be taken literally, and that the poet's official connection with Irakli's court at T'elavi began in 1748. In any case, Sayat'-Nova was established as a minstrel by 1742, the year of his earliest dated poem, in the *lingua franca* of the Caucasus, Azeri,¹⁹ two years before the existence of Irakli's court at T'elavi.

Although Sayat'-Nova was without any doubt the outstanding minstrel of his time and place, it is not probable that he was the chief minstrel to the Georgian court. A Salieri-Mozart situation is very likely. He shows himself well aware that he was one among many, for in 1753, some five years into his twelve odd years as royal minstrel, he resigns himself to the fact that 'Whether I exist or not, a lute will not be lacking

¹⁷ T p. 121; fol. 67A, appends no date. H (Arm.) no. 31, p. 46.

¹⁸ See above, Chapter One, p. 43 n. 144.

¹⁹ *Deriadan ch'êkhup'san khob inji, marjan* 'From the ocean you have taken fair pearls and coral', T p. 63, dated 1st June 430 of the chronicon; see above, Chapter One, p. 21, p. 32 n. 111.

in the assemblies' (*T'eguz ėlim, t'eguz ch'ėlim, mejlisnerun saz ch'i paksi*).²⁰ In his description of the medieval Georgian court, the *Darbazi* or *Mep'is Kari* (Porte du Roi), W.E.D. Allen lists sixty or more different officials (*mokhele*) ministering to it, including scribes, grooms, butlers, tax-collectors, valets, tailors, fruit-servers, ladle-bearers, wine-waiters, cup-bearers, huntsmen and foresters.²¹ In his description of the Georgian court in 1745, thus roughly about the time that Sayat'-Nova made its acquaintance, Prince Vakhusht Batonishvili mentions the Chief of the Cooks, who in addition to the kitcheners, the bakers, the servers at table, the water-carriers, had authority also over the musicians and dancers.²² This may appear an over-extensive brief, but the Manciple of a medieval Oxford or Cambridge college would have charge of the Minstrel's Gallery. At the Georgian court the singers came under the authority of the Chief of the Singers (*Momgheralt'-Ukhutz'esi*). Sayat'-Nova must have served under these officials, since it is highly unlikely that he, as an Armenian of humble birth, held such a senior post. Some of the resentment present in poems that will be discussed below may stem from this circumstance. The background against which Sayat'-Nova performed at court is outlined by Vakhushti, as the son of King Vakhtangi VI a most reliable observer. Banquets given by the King at Easter, at royal weddings, and upon other important occasions, were 'accompanied by music and other diversions. When the Catholicos and bishops were present, there was no instrumental music, only chants. When they had departed, the music, dancing, and diversions began'.²³ The implication that the music of the minstrels was not considered entirely holy by the Catholicos, and perhaps by his young master Giorgi, known for his pious disposition, could have had an influence on Sayat'-Nova's eventual fate.

Although Sayat'-Nova shews himself devoted to Irakli, the relationship was demonstrably not a comfortable one. If the poet had trouble from the King, the King has as much from the poet. Sayat'-Nova was not the only one of his profession to give Irakli cause to look askance at minstrels. A far worse case occurred long after the Armenian's exile from court. In 1795, when Irakli was King of K'art'li and Kakhet'i and Tiflis had been occupied by the troops of Agha Mahmad, it was the king's musician, a fellow Georgian named Aghajan ('Noble soul')

²⁰ In *Dun ėn gėlkhen imastun is*, st. 5 v. 2, I fol. 64r, H p. 20.

²¹ Allen, pp. 258-9.

²² *Description géographique de la Géorgie*, tr. M.-F. Brosset, cit. Allen, p. 262.

²³ *Description...*, p. 35, Allen, p. 331.

Qulamanishvili, who treacherously acted as a guide for the Persians who pursued him in his flight, luckily unsuccessfully.²⁴ As contrast, it was on this occasion that Sayat'-Nova, former fellow royal minstrel, died a martyr's death. In general, the relationship between poets and musicians on the one hand, and kings and nobles on the other, is unlikely to be smooth. Both have a claim to greatness. If kings are touched by Zeus, the poet is beloved of the Muses. Poets have their pride, few more than Sayat'-Nova. His defiant 'When I speak my word, the heavens will roll with thunder'²⁵ is more justified than Sir Oracle's 'When I ope my lips, let no dog bark', but it is germane. In the exchange between Dr. Johnson and Lord Chesterfield, who is it that speaks *de haut en bas*? Not for nothing was the former called The Great Cham, i.e. Khan. Whatever sympathies they shared, the noble sponsor and his commoner protégé were compelled to remain at arm's length. Haydn never laid his arm round Count Eszterházy's shoulder. When it comes to relative greatness in the history of mankind, Posterity is more than a great leveller. The whole world knows that Shakespeare was greater than any of the landlocked and timebound monarchs he portrayed — though one must forgive Elisabeth for not being aware of this.

What sort of a man was Irakli (1720-98), to evoke such admiration on the part of his Armenian minstrel, a sentiment that was clearly sincere, since there is enough evidence in his often high-spirited and outspoken poems to show him to have been no mere flatterer? He must, of course, have been grateful for an appointment that an Armenian may have felt he had no automatic right to expect. The anti-Armenian sentiments on the part of certain courtiers that one can deduce from some of Sayat'-Nova's *plaintes* were clearly not shared by the Georgian king. He was, after all, a scion of the Bagrationi dynasty which had ruled in Georgia since the 8th century, and was aware that his family was a branch of the Bagratunis of the royal house of Armenia, the origins of which were lost in the mists of time and legend, traditionally traced back to the days of the Babylonian captivity. Though it was extinguished in Armenia by Byzantines and Seljuks in the eleventh century, it continued in Georgia until 1801 when the country was incorporated into the Russian Empire, for which one of its sons, Prince Peter Bagration, gave his life at

²⁴ Allen, p. 214. He is as misnamed as the Arab general 'Abd-ur-Rahmân ('Slave of the Most Merciful') who burnt men, women and children alive in the course of his subjection of Armenia in the 7th century as mentioned above, p. 36 n. 123.

²⁵ *Sitqvas vitqvi, tz'am k'ukhili daitsqos*, in *Zghvas vit' daashrobs*, I fol. 16A, B p. 30.

Borodino. The divine origin of the Japanese dynasty being somewhat open to doubt, the Bagratids count as the most ancient and durable royal house in the world, its nobility officially recognised in France till the present day. For Irakli it was an Armenian connection of which one could be proud, a happy circumstance which would not have been lost on Sayat'-Nova, whose claim, in one of his Russian poems, to count the Bagratids as his ancestors, would amount to one of affinity with his royal sponsor. The traditional Jewish origin of the dynasty related by Movsês of Khoren may be no more than a fairy-tale (the name *Bagrat* is clearly Iranian, the equivalent of Theodotos, 'God-given'), but at least it must have served as a curb to any racialism within the Georgian royal family (of which, in fact, there is no trace), and a warning to nationalists among the aristocracy to watch their tongues. The enlightenment that may be claimed for Irakli stood him in good stead with respect to his rule over an ethnically complex kingdom. He was no ordinary, run-of-the-mill monarch, a fact well recognised far beyond the borders of Georgia. News of his valour and success in innumerable military campaigns reputedly provoked his contemporary Frederick the Great of Prussia, who was to Voltaire what Irakli II was to Sayat'-Nova, to remark, 'Moi en Europe, et en Asie l'invincible Hercule'.²⁶ For although a German academic — dons can also claim to be sponsored by the Muses, though of the austerer sort — remarked that the Emperor of Prussia's learning was all very well, though he doubted if he could conjugate the verbs in *-mi*, Frederick knew that Irakli was the Georgian form of Herakles, the Roman Hercules. Serving as frontispiece to Allen's *History of the Georgian people* is a reproduction of a plate published in the *Akti Kavkazskago Arkheologicheskago Komisseyi* as a portrait of the Georgian king. Allen has added the royal titles as 'The Hereditary Sovereign and Prince, Irakli II, by the Grace of God ... King of Kartli, King of Kakheti, Hereditary Prince of Samtzkhe-Saatabago, Ruling Prince of Kazakh, Borchalo, Shamshadilo, Kak, Shaki, Shirvan, Prince and Lord of Ganja and Erivan.' The words omitted after 'The Grace of God', viz. 'and by the Benevolence of Her Imperial Majesty' show that these were the titles by which Irakli ratified the Treaty of Georgievsk of 1784 recognising Catherine the Great's suzerainty over Georgia,²⁷ when Irakli was aged 68. But the full black beard alone

²⁶ Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 201. See Addenda, p. 452.

²⁷ Allen, p. 211. His order of St. George proclaims a Christian monarch.

shows a much younger man, probably of Irakli after his succession to the thrones of Tiflis and T'elavi in 1762 at the age of 46. Even allowing for the generous (well-remunerated) imagination of royal portraitists, it is a striking picture of a handsome, alert, firm-chinned man, with an intelligent brow, and sensitive lips that suggest a sense of humour; the imperious look that otherwise characterises such portraits is absent. Opology has its dangers, but it is the face of a fair and honest man of sound judgment, a man that one would trust. This impression is corroborated by his known acts, and the evidence of his contemporaries. The Armenian soldier of fortune, Joseph Emin, whose dreams of Armenian independence might well have clouded his view of this Georgian ruler of Erevan (though he was a Bagratid), describing him in 1763, aged 47, brimmed with admiration: 'Heraclius had been one of the greatest men living if his mind could have been turned into the path of truth [that Emin's definition of truth would have comprised Armenian independence can be assumed]. In regard to the character of the people, he was in every respect the first man among them, which enabled him to have the command over all. He was without the least pride, stiffness or domineering deportment which are so common to Asiatic princes, and with such a quickness of apprehension, that at the opening of any subject, he understood the whole extent of it. His voice in pronouncing words was so melodiously sweet that his hearer, without seeing his greenish brown complexion mentioned before, would have thought an angel was haranging [the quality of Irakli's voice would not have failed to impress Sayat'-Nova the singer] ... Of pride he had not the least particle, he never perhaps boasted in his life'. Emin testifies both to Irakli's mental alertness and to the sense of humour already suspected, though the humour he records is of the less subtle sort: 'The only watchful man Emin ever saw among them [i.e. the Georgian army in the field during the watches of the night] was the prince himself, who sat up sometimes till one, sometimes till two in the morning, with his household servants whom one might see often half-asleep standing upon their legs before the prince, till they dropped upon the ground, and afforded great amusement'.²⁸ Since one can be sure that these servants had risen at the crack

²⁸ *The life and adventures of Joseph Emin, an Armenian, written by himself*, London, 1792, pp. 209, 227, 247-8, *cit.* Allen, pp. 202, 196. The view of Heaven by Emin, whose own complexion would not have been that of a Norwegian, is interesting, reminding one that angels in Persian miniatures are always white, this colour stemming doubtless from an ancient chromatic dualism reflected in Eznik's account of Ormizd and Ahriman.

of dawn, to prepare the *lit du roi* maybe by noon, one can admire neither Irakli's delicacy, nor the humanity of his revolutionary biographer, perhaps only with reservations proud to be a man of the people. However, in a relatively savage age and region, there is no sign of deliberate cruelty or gratuitous massacring on the part of Irakli: on the contrary, like his father T'eimurazi II, whose humanity was displayed in his considerate treatment of an ally of the Turks, Givi Amilakhori, in 1746,²⁹ he was generous in victory. Again like his father, he was concerned for the dignity of the Georgian throne, and made great efforts to revive the ancient traditions of the monarchy.³⁰ That music and poetry, as in the days of Queen T'amara and Shot'a Rust'aveli, formed part of these endeavours, of importance for the like of Sayat'-Nova, who was expensively liveried and, in his own words, treated like a noble, is evident from Vakhushti's account of the Georgian court in 1745.

Where there are monarchs, there are nobles, and it is a rare kingdom indeed that knows no friction between the two. Irakli was a diplomatic and patient ruler, but it may have been largely his hankering after past glories that caused him to fail, in Allen's words, 'to discipline his nobles, although their arrogant privilege and continuing immunities constituted an anachronism in the social body which threatened and eventually occasioned the destruction of the monarchy and of the state'.³¹ The King bared his heart to Joseph Emin, allegedly confessing, 'With all my care and pains, I cannot make anything of them, nor find a single soul who has sense enough to incline his mind or bend his thoughts towards meaning well; but, on the other hand, they are wicked to the soul, false to the very bone; in a word, they were born twenty-four hours before the devil... "What shall we do," Irakli asked Emin, "to make men of them?" Emin said, "Break them into small pieces like glass, to be cast afresh."³² Sayat'-Nova, one feels, would not have been unsympathetic to such recycling, for he had suffered much, judging by the many references in his poems which have the natural ring of sincerity, from aristocratic insolence. The King, who ruled over what Allen has called 'an experimental federation of the Caucasian peoples',³³

²⁹ Allen, p. 193, n. 6.

³⁰ According to his biographers Papuna Orbeliani and Oman Kherkeulidze, *cit.* Allen, p. 202.

³¹ Allen, *ibid.*

³² Emin, p. 207, *cit.* Allen, p. 202.

³³ Allen, p. 205.

composed in the main of Georgians, Armenians and Tatars/Azeris (two centuries later we may observe how fragile such attempts have been), was doubtless delighted with a minstrel who could charm his subjects each in their own language, and, in the spirit of Rust'aveli, might mould their minds in the subtle and sophisticated traditions of Iran, whose civilisation he admired, whose modern rulers he had served and to whom he owed his throne. Irakli, as Allen so well puts it, 'nervous, brittle and intelligent in his small tumbling world, felt out this way and that for the bricks of some stability.'³⁴ As a soldier king of wide experience, he first sought to construct a Georgian army on European, primarily Russian, models. But, as with his self-confessed *alter ego* in Prussia, who courted in Voltaire the leading representative of the intellectual spirit of the Age of Enlightenment, the world of the mind was anything but closed to him. He sought with the cooperation of the Georgian Catholicos, himself, however, no part of the Age of Enlightenment, but one suspected of sympathy for the authoritarian doctrines of Rome (though it must be said that intellectually this must have counted as progress in comparison with the intellectual status of the Greek Orthodox church of Russia, for example), to, again in the words of Allen, 'restore the ancient universities of Tiflis and T'elavi.'³⁵ There was, of course, nothing wrong with the Georgian intellect. The 17th-century traveller Chardin wrote of them that 'they are naturally very witty, nor would there be more learned men, or more ingenious masters in the world, were they best improved by the knowledge of arts and sciences.'³⁶ By Irakli's time, a century later, they were not yet so improved, and it was mainly to Armenians, bereft of an aristocracy without showing this to be a disadvantage, that he turned for counsel: to Joseph Emin on matters military and political; to Têr P'ilipê Ghaytmazian for philosophy; to Mirza Gurgin Enikolop'ian and his son Karaman for diplomatic relations with the Turks,³⁷ and, as a cultural ambassador in the world of Euterpe and Polymnia, to Sayat'-Nova, who himself regarded his function as being that of a bridge-builder. 'Mercy upon the old master craftsman, building a bridge' (*Rahmat' p'ir ustada k'(o)rp'i t'ik'ana*), he asks, in an Azeri poem of 1758, one year before the end of his career as a minstrel. It was a hard and thankless task, and his disillusionment shows through: 'I gave my soul for the nation, used

³⁴ Allen, p. 201.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Chardin, 1686 edition, p. 190, *cit.* Allen, p. 356.

³⁷ Allen, p. 201.

up my life' (*El ich'un jan verdum, umbrum tak'at'tum*).³⁸ Some Georgians, resenting their King's galling Armenophile ways, would out of misguided patriotism or sheer envy have looked upon Sayat'-Nova as a heretical (monophysite) and foreign upstart, of low social origin, with dress, airs and graces way above his station. He would have reached the hearts of many by his poetic and musical skills; but his mention in his eulogy to his K'amanch'a, a swan-song of 1759, of the *nak'az mart'*, the *amousos*, shows that he encountered some of the other sort. Even among those with cultural pretensions he could well have encountered hostility. One recalls the envious snobbery which drove the university-educated Robert Greene to attempt to dismiss Shakespeare as 'an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers'. There was malice in Georgian society, much of it among the influential. Chardin, again, while admitting for some members courtesy, gravity, and moderation, castigated others for their immorality, drunkenness, knavery, and arrogance. There was clearly more than one opportunity for Sayat'-Nova to acquire a few enemies among them. And there were perhaps even more dangerous pitfalls for a young man in love with love. Chardin found the Georgian women, though subtle, intelligent, civil, and beautiful, 'the Wickedest Women in the World'.³⁹ There is no evidence that life at court improves a lady's morals, and a trusting raw milk drinking son of the soil could be in particular danger.

Already by 1753 there are indications that the minstrel's path was not running smooth. We have mentioned above that there are some, for example Hasrat'yan and Gaysaryan,⁴⁰ who believe that he was banished from the King's presence for a period of two to three years, while others, for example Baramidze,⁴¹ are of the opinion that there are no sources to justify such a theory. Do the poems provide any evidence one way or the other?

In *Ari indz angach kal, ay divana sirt* 'Come, listen to me, mad heart' of 1st May 1753,⁴² the poet appeals to his heart, the *dil-i shaidâ* of Hâfiz, to be sage:

*Ari indz angach kal, ay divana sirt.
Haya sirê, adab sirê, ar sirê.*

³⁸ St. 1, vv. 1,3, T p. 43, I fol. 31A, H (in Armenian translation), p. 179.

³⁹ *Loc. cit.*, n. 29.

⁴⁰ H pp. xxv, xxvii; Gaysaryan, p. 33. See above, Chapter Two, p. 67 n. 45.

⁴¹ Pp. 96-7.

⁴² So dated by H p. 28, according to a folio once in T, but now lost.

Ashkhark'ës k'unñ ėli, inch' pitis tani.
Astvats sirê, hok'i sirê, yar sirê.

'Come, listen to me, mad heart.
 Love modesty, love courtesy, love a sense of shame.
 Let this world sleep its sleep, what need you take from it.
 Love God, love the soul, love the Beloved.'

He asks his heart to act according to God's commandments, and follow the teachings to be found in the *Lives of the Fathers*, and to 'love Scripture, love writing, love books' (*Gir sirê, ghalam sirê, davt'ar sirê*). He asks it to behave so that people should not laugh at it, to love advice, patience, law:

Hentz' ban ara, mart' věret ch'i tsitsaghi.
Khrat sirê, sabër sirê, shar sirê.

Then, with respect to one's fellow men, 'Do not act proudly, when you approach your lord. Be humble towards those lower than yourself. God has given to all one soul. Love the poor, love the guest, love the stranger':

Hpartut'in ch'anis dur gu k'as tērit.
Khonarut'in ara kantz' k'iz deverit.
Astvats dip'unantz'ēn min hok'i erit.
Aghkat sirê, ghonagh sirê, tar sirê.

'Sayat'-Nova,' he concludes, 'you will be blest if you act so. You will give life to your soul, mind, and body. If you wish, when you do not see justice, love the monastery, love the wilderness, love the stones.'

Sayat'-Nova, ērne k'iz, t'e ēs anis.
Hok'ut khat'ri marmnut umbër kēs anis.
T'e g'uzis, vur dadastan ch'ē tesanis,
Vank' sirê, anapat sirê, k'ar sirê.

It is this signing off, with its apparent loss of faith in the justice to be expected from men, that has led some to think that the poet is in great trouble in 1753, and it is at least ironic that it does in fact anticipate his eventual fate in 1759 and after, when some form of *datastan* by Irakli did lead to his removal from the court to the shores of the Caspian and eventually to a monastery in a stony wilderness at Haghpat.

But the poem, an *uch'lama* (Az. *üchlämä*) or listing of triads (cf. the same process in Hebrew literature, e.g. *Proverbs*, 30,29, 'There be three things which go well', etc.), belongs to a didactic genre particularly common in Sayat'-Nova's Azeri works, and there is no compelling

reason to think it other than conventional. Indeed, there are in it elements which suggest that it was not meant to be taken solely on a highly serious, spiritual level, namely, the word-play at which the poet was so adept. *Yar sirê* may be taken as an injunction to love the Beloved with reference, as with Persian mystics, to 'the Friend' (P *yâr*), i.e. God, or, as *yar* is most often used by Sayat'-Nova, to one's earthly beloved. *Davt'ar sirê* can be taken to refer to the Scriptures, but the more usual connotation of *davt'ar* (Az *dävtär*) is 'a book of verses', as in *Indz siretz'ir, êshkhên ėngar, khaghi davt'ar im k'iz ama* 'You have come to love me, you have fallen in love, I am a book of verses for you', a poem which by its happy mood suggests that if there were trouble in the life of the poet in 1753, it was over by the time of the composition or performance of this song, 1st April 1754.⁴³ In any case, there is nothing in this poem of 1753, if one can trust the dating at all, to suggest any particular trouble in the poet's life at court, such as that discussed below.⁴⁴

The situation is very different in another poem which, although absent entirely from the *Tetrak* as we now have it, and undated in Ioane's manuscript, is attributed to the year 1753 by Hasrat'yan.⁴⁵ This is the celebrated Ode, listed as one of the poet's seven best by Hasrat'yan,⁴⁶ *Dun ên gëlkhên*⁴⁷ *imastun is, khilk'ët himarin bab mi ani* 'You were ever wise, do not make your mind a gate for the fool (to walk through)'. This is clearly an appeal to the king, in the person of Rustahm son of Zâl, to do him justice: *Ch'ëka k'iz pês huk'mi hek'im, dun Rostomi Zal, t'a-k'avur* 'There is no legal authority like you, Rustahm son of Zâl.'⁴⁸

⁴³ T p. 131, H (Arm.) no. 23, p. 36, st. 1 v. 1; dated in the margin April 1, 442 of the chronicon. The light-hearted nature of this poem is evident from the two Georgian annotations. That in the lower margin reads *ese arut'inisa da t'avisi saqvareli rom ulaparaknat' is aris es saqvarels ut'k'oms da pirdapir saiat'novas k'(roni)k(s) UMB* 'This is of Arut'in and his beloved who speak to each other, that is, this beloved and Sayat'-Nova speak to each other face to face, (year) of the chronicon 442.' That in the right margin reads *ese ert'i ighrarians iars ut'k'oms da gaghmit' p'urtz'lisagan saiat'novasa aprilis A k'(roni)k(s) UMB* '(In) this one faithful lover speaks and from the other side of the leaf Sayat'-Nova, April 1, 442 of the chronicon.' In other words, an imagined conversation between a lover and his lass.

⁴⁴ Pp. 94-100.

⁴⁵ H (Arm.) no. 10, p. 20.

⁴⁶ H p. 20.

⁴⁷ *ên glkhên* = Grg. *im t'avit'-ve* Lit. 'from that very head (i.e. beginning)', 'von Anfang an' (Tschenkeli), cf. T *baştan* 'from the beginning' (Redhouse). Cf. v. 3, 'Was I not burnt from the start (*ên gëlkhên*), do not roast me anew!' The idiom is common, but the poets parallel use in the second hemistich of *khilk'* 'mind, sense, brains' suggests he is tactfully appealing to the king to use his head.

⁴⁸ St. 2, v. 1.

This is clearly the work of one who feels he is being slandered and persecuted, and unjustly, for imagined wrongs: *Erazuměn tesatsi hid mizi mē hesab mi ani* 'Do not call us to account for something seen in a dream.' The *mizi* 'us' may mean that another was involved with him, the *mē hesab* 'one account' possibly that he feels that there were different degrees of guilt, perhaps that he was led astray. One has the strong impression that it is another case of *cherchez la femme*. There is no indication as to the identity of his slanderer. A verse in the undated Georgian poem *Shuaghamis varskvlavivit* 'You are like a star at midnight', namely *Vintz' rom gnakhams, naghveli khar, vashi khar* 'Whoever looks upon you, you are (for him the cause of much) care (*lit.* gall), you are a tell-tale',⁴⁹ points to an indiscreet lady-love. There is, however, a half-confession that he himself may be at fault, for he is ready to subject himself to punishment: *T'e êsantz' êl such' unenam, glukhs ara tal, t'ak'avur* 'If I am guilty of these things, have my head (chopped) off, O King!' But the punishment must be condign: *Mëtik ara k'u Stegh-tsoghin, nahakh tigh qazab*⁵⁰ *mi ani* 'Remember your Creator, do not wrong me unjustly.' And rehabilitation is better than punishment: *Yaralun hek'imn endur guzê, digh talu ê, tz'av talu ch'ê* 'When the wounded man wants a doctor, he will give him a medicine, not (further) pain.' He asks the King to keep his heart pure, since the word of an enemy is not to be believed: *Dun k'u sirtên istak pahê, yadi khoskên avtalu ch'ê*. As one appealing to (having recourse to?) God's charity, he should vouchsafe no answer from his court: *Asstsu sêrên kanch'oghi pês dërnemet jughab mi ani*.⁵¹ The intervening verse between these two is

⁴⁹ St. 4, v. 5, I fol. 4A, B p. 50.

⁵⁰ Az. *qäsb* (Azizbäy), for APT *ghašb* 'seizing violently, wrong, injustice' (Steingass), confused (cf. the Persian pronunciation of غ *gh* as ق *q*) with APT *qasb* 'cutting into joints (as a butcher, *qassâb*), accusing, blaming'. The confusion could be but grist to the calembourist's mill. The -z- is wrong.

⁵¹ *Lit.* 'like one calling the love of God from your door (or court) do not give answer.' The grammar is imperfect, as the *pês* 'like, as' would normally refer to the subject of the sentence, i.e. the King. V.S. Nersesyan, *Sayat'-Nova, Hayeren khagher*, Erevan, 1968, p. 169, presumably reading the verse as '(To him who) like one calling the love of God from your gate do not give answer', suggests that the 'love of God' is the Armenian pilgrim's cry, so, 'if someone should call from your gate like a pilgrim, do not answer him'. If this were in fact a reference to an hypocritical calumniator, it would echo *Luke* 13, 25-27: 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence ye are ... Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity' (AV). It is possible that Sayat'-Nova had this passage in mind. It is a pity his grammar obfuscates it. A reference to the pilgrim's cry is made, with different

one of the poet's most ambiguous, unfortunately so, since it may contain a clue to the charge levelled against him:

K'ani g'uzê arbab ėli, ghulĕn aghin dav talutz' ch'ĕ

'As much as he wishes to be a master, the slave will not give *dav* to his lord.'

The most obvious meaning of *dav* is Arm. *daw* 'stratagem, fraud, trick, plot, trap' (Bedrossian).⁵² Most translators and commentators have, however, interpreted *dav* as APT دعاى دعا *da'wa*, Georgian loanword *dava*, 'action at law, lawsuit, court case'; in Azeri, *dava* appears to have only the meanings (basic rather than derived, cf. German *Sache* 'court case' — thence generalised to 'thing' — from a basic Germanic root *sak* 'to quarrel verbally', Kluge-Götze, 1948) of 'quarrel, uproar, campaign' ('draka, debosh, svalka, pokhod', Azizbäy). From a phonetic point of view, such an equation is imperfect. Sayat'-Nova's well-attested indifference to the final *-a/ă* of such loans is limited in the singular to oblique cases, while in the singular nominative/accusative inanimate, which *dav* is here, the vowel is preserved: thus, *sap'e-i-n* (gen.dat.loc. defined) 'in pleasure', but *sap'a* (nom.acc.) 'pleasure'⁵³ (APT صفا *şafâ*), *bap'e-i-n* 'to

intent, by the 13th-century Western troubadour Guiot de Dijon: *Dex, quant crieront Outree, / Sire, aidiés au pelerin / Por cui sui espoentee, / Car felon sunt Sarrazin* 'God, when they cry Outree ("Onwards!"), Lord help the pilgrim for whom I tremble, for wicked are the Saracens' (Chaytor, p. 133). The rendering of SN's verse by one of the best Russian translators of Sayat'-Nova, Valeri Bryusov (*apud* Gaysaryan, p. 70), is misleading: I swear by the true God: why persecute me inexorably?' (*Ya bogom istinnym klyanus': menya neshchadno gnat' zachem?*). This cannot be excused by the rhyme scheme, since he chooses as the refrain rhyme a syllable in *-at*: thus *otvechat* 'answer' could have been used in the rendering of *jughab mi ani* 'do not give answer', with no need to introduce *gnat* 'chase, persecute'; and *neshchadno* 'unforgivingly, mercilessly', of which the poet does not actually accuse the King, is unnecessary.

⁵² For another possible cryptic appearance of the word, cf. the Georgian and Armenian characters written, almost certainly by the poet himself, outside the frame of *Dard mi ani* in T p. 103: see Plate C.

⁵³ In *Amen sazi mech'ĕn govats*, st. 4, v. 3. In nominative/accusative singulars followed by an enclitic pronoun, and in nominative plurals in *-k'* (still alive in the Tiflis Armenian dialect of Sayat'-Nova), the final *-a* becomes *-e*: *shushe-t* 'thy glass' (PT *shĕshah* 'glass' rather than PT *shĕshah* 'gold or silver ingot'; cf. G *shusha* 'glass', vocalic dissimilation because of native G *shishi* 'fear', with subsequent influence on Armenian?) in *Ari hamov*, st. 1, v. 4, H p. 53; *shusha(-brolĕ)* '(crystal) glass' in *Hĕndkatz' k'aghak'itz'ĕn*, st. 4, v. 2, H p. 63; *sap'e-n* 'the pleasure' (APT *şafâ*), in *Arantz' k'iz*, st. 3, v. 3; *hujre-k'-n* 'his chambers' in *Bedaslin*, st. 2, v. 2, Hasrat'yan, p. 61, *hujra* (APT *hujrah*, *hücre*, Az. *hüjra*, 'chamber, cell') in *Vuntz'or vur gharib bĕlbulĕn*, st. 3, v. 2, H p. 45. The final *-a/ă* is absorbed in plurals in *-er*: *agh-er(-umen)* '(from) *aghâs*', in *Ashkharĕs me p'anjara ĕ*, st. 3, v. 4, H p. 70 (cf. the dat.sg. *agh-i-n* of the verse under discussion).

his loyalty'⁵⁴, but *bap'a* 'loyalty' (acc.)⁵⁵ (APT *وفا*, *wafâ*). Grammatically, therefore, only Arm. *dav* 'deceit, etc.' is correct. Since, however, Sayat'-Nova's listeners were possibly as insusceptible to morphological niceties as his translators and commentators, it is perhaps as well to admit the implications of *da'wa* to the discussion, the Azeri and Georgian *dava* being more familiar to many inhabitants of Tiflis and T'elavi than Armenian *daw*. It is moreover not the case that the most obvious interpretation of a verse is the one intended by the poet: in *trobar clus*, the real message is concealed behind one, in cryptographical terms, in clear. Sayat'-Nova has something to say to the King, to whom the poem is addressed, but what? The poet's first editor, Akhverdian in 1852, though surely misinterpreting the first hemistich, interprets *dav* in the legal sense of *da'wa*: 'However much the servant may be deprived/dispossessed, he cannot sue or appeal against his master' (*ork'an êl tsaran zrkuats lini, ch'i karogh datakhndir linel kam boghok'el tirojitz*).⁵⁶ He is followed by the poet's most celebrated⁵⁷ Russian translator, Valeri Bryusov, who, after mistranslating the first hemistich differently, has 'They rail heatedly at the slave, he still cannot appeal to a court' (*Raba rugayut sgoryacha, sudit'sya vsyozhe ne mozhet on*). That the serf, servant, or slave (the distinction between these terms is very fine in the present chronological context, and not of an etymological nature) was certainly at great legal disadvantage *vis-à-vis* his master or social superior in 18th-century Georgia is clear from Vakhushti's work of 1745, which shows that if a man killed his superior, he had to pay the latter's naturally much higher blood-price, and might in addition incur other penalties, such as expropriation, imprisonment, mutilation, and execution.⁵⁸ Wergeld was an old tradition in Georgia, one which Sayat'-Nova might well recommend Irakli not to apply on traditional lines. An example of social inequality in this respect, adduced by Brosset from the 11th century, is afforded by the Avshanadze family, a member of which had a blood-price of (at the 1932 rate of exchange) 5,000 pounds sterling, with, as a preliminary down payment, '12 peasants, 12 white mules, 12 white falcons, 12 running dogs, 12 stone falcons, and some satin legs of

⁵⁴ In *Askharës me p'anjara ê*, st. 4, v. 2, H p. 70.

⁵⁵ In *Eshkën var kërak ê*, st. 5, v. 2, H p. 30.

⁵⁶ *Cit.* H p. 279.

⁵⁷ But not the first, who appears to have been Ya. Polonskiy, 'Sayat-Nova', *Kavkaz*, 1851, nos. 1, 2, 'Pevets Sayat-Nova', *Kavkaz*, 1853, nos. 10, 11. Bryusov's version is reproduced by Gaysaryan, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁸ *Description géographique de la Géorgie*, *cit.* Allen, p. 276.

boots'.⁵⁹ This would not appear to rate the *glekhi* or peasant, as Sayat'-Nova insists he was,⁶⁰ very high. The fact that percentages of any fine imposed went to the judge and the sovereign⁶¹ meant, human nature, which Caucasian judges may be assumed to have shared, being what it is, assured that litigation was an expensive affair far beyond the means of the humble servant. The grammar of the first hemistich is not clear: as long as *who* wishes to be *arbab*? Hasrat'yan translated the phrase as with the servant as grammatical subject: 'However much the servant, serf may become adept, skilled, rise, still ...' (*ork'an êl tsaran, chortě, dzeŕnhas, chartar lini, bardzrana, êli...*).⁶² *arbab*, grammatically the Arabic plural of *rabb* 'lord' (a singular itself often used by Sayat'-Nova) need not indeed signify any high social rank, and is used in Persian in expressions such as *arbâb-i san'at* "masters of trade", 'artificers, artisans', *arbâb-i qalam* "lords of the pen", 'civil functionaries', *arbâb-i nashat* "lords of gladness", 'dancers and singers' (Steingass). It denotes, of course, a higher social rank than that of serf or peasant. If it were meant by the poet to refer to himself, it might imply an ambition to rise in society. On the other hand, he must have felt himself already superior to an artisan, more as an *ustâd* 'master instrumentalist', on the way to becoming a *pîr* or 'spiritual guide'. In disclaiming any hierarchical ambition, he does not contrast his condition as a son of the soil with the artisan, but with the prince: 'I am a peasant; I have no wish to be a prince' (*Me glekhi var t'avadoba ar minda*).⁶³ The term *arbab*, however, is in no way confined to artisans, but preserves its basic meaning as 'lords, masters, possessors' (Steingass), as in *arbâb-i taghallub* "lords of conquest", 'superiors, conquerors', and may be used in Persian also in the singular⁶⁴ as 'proprietor, possessor of fiefs or villages, as in *arbâb-i dih* 'a village chief' (Steingass). It would therefore not be an untoward title for Irakli, especially, since he in the opening verse of the poem has been called particularly wise, and one who should not open his mind to fools, in its Persian usage in *arbâb-i tamyîz* 'judicious, prudent', *arbâb-i*

⁵⁹ Brosset, *Introduction à l'histoire de la Géorgie*, pp. xciii-iv, clxxvii, *cit.* Allen, p. 277, who proposes the monetary conversion: 60 years later one can add more than a nought.

⁶⁰ *me glekhi var mitsaze dasaxali* 'I am a peasant, at home on the soil', in *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice', st. 2, v. 2, B p. 17; *me glekhi var, t'avadoba ar minda* 'I am a peasant, I have no wish to be a prince', in *Dameskhnebi/Damekhseni*, st. 5, v. 5, B p. 21.

⁶¹ Allen, p. 277, and his sage remarks p. 281.

⁶² H p. 279.

⁶³ B p. 21.

⁶⁴ Hence a double plural in Persian *arbâbân* 'lords, grandees' (Steingass).

khirad, *abâb-i dânish* ‘sage, intelligent’, etc. It is thus possible to interpret the first hemistich in a way which may well expose the real message of the verse, another word of advice to the king wholly in accord with its general context: namely, to understand the implied grammatical subject to be not the servant (*ghulĕn*), but the lord (*agha*):⁶⁵ thus, ‘As long as the lord has the will to be master, (the servant will accord his lord no deceit). For this, interpreting *dav* straightforwardly as Armenian ‘fraud, deceit’, is what the whole poem is about: the King should not allow himself to be deceived by his own servants. The advice is followed by two verses admonishing him not to believe the word of an enemy (i.e. surely one of Sayat⁺-Nova’s), and to refrain from reacting to idle rumours from outside or from inside his court. Thus the verse, on the surface a general and somewhat trite social comment of no particular relevance to Sayat⁺-Nova’s petition, is seen to be of very special interest to Sayat⁺-Nova’s troubles, which more discipline on the part of the King in his relations with his ministers (it was the necessity of treating these with some circumspection that called for an oblique approach) could alleviate. Deceit (*dav*) is the burden of Sayat⁺-Nova’s charge. Whether or not his listeners thought of Georgian and Azeri *dava* ‘court case’ could do no harm.

⁶⁵ This would imply that in the second hemistich it is the second noun (*agh-in*) that bears the emphasis, not the first (*qulĕn*): ‘That lord the servant will not deceive’. A parallel case of the emphasised noun in second position is found in st. 5, v. 1, of this poem: *K’ani g’uzê k’amin tanê, tsovenen avaz ch’i paksi* ‘However much the wind may wish to blow it away, from the sea it is not *sand* that will be lacking.’ This would be in full accord with such a Turkish phrase as *kul ağayı aldatmıyacak* ‘it is not the agha that the servant will deceive’ (though he may deceive someone else); *ağayı kul aldatmıyacak* would mean ‘it is not the servant (though it may be someone else) who will deceive the agha’. Cf. the examples cited by J. Ciopinski: *bu yerde bülbül ötüyor* ‘C’est le rossignol qui chante dans cet endroit’, contrasted with *bülbül bu yerde ötüyor* ‘C’est dans cet endroit que le rossignol chante’, ‘Remarques sur les constructions syntactiques du type *bülbül öten yer* et leur réalisation dans la langue turque’, *Folia Orientalia*, Polska Akademia Nauk: Kraków, 1969, t. X, p. 60. Whether Sayat⁺-Nova’s word order here is an example of the undeniable Turkish influence on Modern Armenian syntax (e.g. in the development of what adherents of linguistics as a visual art call left-moving word-order) is open to discussion, but it is certainly possible that by *ghulĕn aghin dav talu ch’e* the poet primarily meant ‘It is not that lord (who has the will to be master in his own house) that the servant will deceive’ (certainly, if the phrase is taken to be of typical Sayat⁺-Novian ambiguity, it is at least one interpretation). Following this line of reasoning, **aghin ghulĕn dav talu ch’ê* would have meant ‘It is not that servant (who wishes to become a master) who will deceive his lord’, a statement of somewhat doubtful exactitude; and there is no prosodic reason why the poet should not have adopted the latter order, the second hemistich of the following verse having just that rhythm: *yadî khôskĕn âvtalu ch’ê*.

Despite his stance as suppliant, Sayat^ʿ-Nova had sufficient belief in his own worth not to submit to the charges of calumniators, however powerful, and to a possible damaging reaction by the King, lying down. With a pride in his own original gifts that recalls that of his predecessors Horace, Ḥâfîz, Bernard de Ventadorn, and Shakespeare,⁶⁶ but in verses more mystical, even more majestic than theirs, he proclaims — and they are lines that every Armenian who knows anything of Sayat^ʿ-Nova at all will know —

*Amen mart^ʿ ch^ʿi kana khěmi im jurěn, urish jěrên ê.
Amen mart^ʿ ch^ʿi kana kart^ʿa im girěn, urish gěrên ê.
Buniat^ʿēs avaz ch^ʿimanas, k^ʿarap^ʿ ê, k^ʿarukěrên ê.
Selavi pēs ařantz^ʿ tz^ʿamk^ʿil, dun shutov kharab mi ani.*

‘Not everyone can drink of my water, it is of another water.
Not everyone can read my writing, it is of a different script.
Do not think my substance sand: it is a crag of solid rock.
As like a torrent that never dries, do not you (try to) wear it down!’

Though the poet likens one who would try to wear him down as a constant stream will a rock, the direct use of ‘thou’ (*dun*) to the King of Georgia is bold defiance indeed. Then, however, as though suddenly aware of his vulnerability, he realises that he may be little more than sand in the wind before the power of the King, that he is a grain among many, that the King is not dependent upon him for minstrelsy, that he is no more in this vast universe than a strand of hair:

*K^ʿani guzê k^ʿamin tanê, tsovemen avaz ch^ʿi paksi.
T^ʿeguz ėlim, t^ʿeguz ch^ʿėlim, mejlisnerun saz ch^ʿi paksi.
T^ʿe ku paksim, k^ʿiz ku paksim, ashkharis me maz ch^ʿi paksi.*

‘However much the wind may blow it away, there will be no lack of sand from the sea.
Whether I be, or whether I be not, there will be no lack of music at court.
If I am not there, am not there for you, not (as much as) a single hair will be lacking in this world.’

His final verse, full of a melancholy foreboding only partly traditional, and which time would largely justify, shows that the poet is aware despite his protests and defiance, that it is in the power of the King, should he let himself be swayed by caluminators, to exile him not only from the court and the capital, but from Georgia itself, ultimately to die among strangers:

⁶⁶ See below, Chapter Five, pp. 131-3.

Sayat'-Novu gerezmanēn Hind, Habash, Arab mi ani.

'Do not cause Sayat'-Nova's tomb to be an Indian, Abyssinian, or Arabian one.'

What effect Sayat'-Nova's moving poem had — and it is certainly one of his best — whether the King accepted his plea or whether he dismissed him for a time from his court at T'elavi, the annals of Georgia, for which the lot of a minstrel is of no importance, will not tell us, and from the poet himself one can expect no more than veiled hints.

Although the above poem is no longer contained in the *Tetrak* and Ioane's version is undated, there is no good reason to doubt the date of 441 of the chronicon (A.D. 1753) attached to it by Akhverdyan, who must have seen the chronological note reproduced by Hasrat'yan,⁶⁷ and this episode in Sayat'-Nova's troubles, whatever its consequence, can be dated then. Indeed, another work of the poet, copied, perhaps significantly, as the last poem in the *Tetrak* immediately preceding the main colophon,⁶⁸ and dated firmly at 441 of the chronicon (A.D. 1753), may contain clues to the cause of Sayat'-Nova's difficulties with his royal sponsor. This is the cryptic *Is kanch'um im Lalanin* 'I call Lalanin', described in the right-hand margin as *rubai baiat'i t'aslibi*, i.e. quatrains of chiasmic verse. This description is not exact, the poem being composed of 5 quintains comprising four verses of seven syllables followed by one verse of 14 (7 + 7), each quintain followed by a quatrain of hendecasyllabic verses. The true description of the poem occurs in the text itself, st. 3 v. 2, where it is called 'a *tejni*s (APT *tejnîs*) (and) a *varsakh* (T *vârsâqî*) conjoined'. The latter is a Turkish 'ballad metre' (Redhouse) and refers to the quatrains. These form a separate poem in Ioane's manuscript, where he however omits st. 4 thereof, repeating st. 2 by oversight,⁶⁹ and it is printed separately also by Hasrat'yan.⁷⁰ Hasrat'yan, underlining the fact that Sayat'-Nova mentions his name both in the last quintain and in the last quatrain (thus giving two *makhlaş*), must be correct in surmising that two independent poems were put together to form the *Is kanch'um im Lalanin*.⁷¹ Moreover, the rhyme scheme of the first quatrain, *x a y a* is that of a traditional initial quatrain, subsequent quatrains rhyming *b b b a*, etc. It was possibly the final rhymes of this

⁶⁷ P. 20.

⁶⁸ T p. 139.

⁶⁹ Fol. 59.

⁷⁰ (Arm.) no. 55, p. 72.

⁷¹ H notes to (Arm.) no. 11, p. 237, and (Arm.) no. 55, p. 251.

otherwise very conventional *mukhammas* of *murabba'*, therefore the earlier composition, containing the syllables *ani* that gave the poet the idea of interlacing it with his new *tejnīs* in 1753, for, as we shall see, the element *an* was that around which the whole poem turns. The Arabic term *tajnīs*, borrowed in Persian and Turkish, signifies 'combining one *jins* "genus (Gk. *génos*)" with another', i.e. 'making homogeneous, alliteration, jingle of rhymes, pun, play on words' (Steingass). That this term applies to the quintains is one thing that is clear in this fine example of an obfuscating genre, and its aptness will be investigated after the reproduction of the text. Another thing that seems clear is that the poet, in constructing this intricate and enthusiastic verse, was not conscious of labouring under stress. That the poem may have subsequently provoked some, perhaps when his riddles had been solved, is another matter. But at this particular point in 1753, trouble of a practical nature with the Georgian court has not begun, suggesting that the poem is earlier than the 'You were ever wise' discussed above.

IS K'ANCH'UM IM LALANIN

Is k'anch'um im LALANIN
Badeshkanên lal anin.
Vai t'e hasrat'êt miñnim.
Bēlbul lizus lal anin.
Dostirēs hiñu kangnin^a iadirēn gan lal anin.
K'iz^b saz gu k'a al qumashēn^c, nazani.
Iek^d, chakatit kapē zarlu muqaish.
Dzirēt bērnē oskejēr(a)ts^e mēkratēn.
Khujuj khujuj^f tsamerut^g tur^h araish.
Is kanch'um im IARANIN
T'ejnis varsakh iaranin.
Ov asav t'e nēhakh tigh
Iarit m(e)ch'ēn iar anin.
Avetaranēnⁱ ku ta khonar mart'un ier anin.
Patvak(a)n^j tesnelu novabu najar.
Bēlbulin gēzhvetz'nogh^k t'op^e vart'i sajar.
Ach'kirēt unk'erut^l elav muhajar^m.
T'ert'erukit mazēn zar oskovⁿ zarnish.

a. T miswrites as *knagnin*. b. TI; H curtails to *k'i*. c. I *qumashn*, T *qmashn*. d. T; I *ik'*. e. T; I *dzirit' brnis es oskejrats*. f. T; I *u khujuts* g. I; T *kaverut*. h. T; I *tr*. i. I; T *avetaranin*. j. T; I *patvankan*. k. T; I *bulbulin spanogh*. l. T; I *unk'irt ach'kerit'*. m. I; T *muhjar*. n. I; T *zarosku* (with obliterated letter between *s* and *k*).

Is kanch'um im ZAIANIN
NU (u) AIB (u)^o ZAI anin.
Du is asi nēhakh tigh
Iari sirtēn zai anin.
Shahn êr k'ash^p, ch'êr dīmana es im k'ashats zai anin.
Hutēt ashkhar^a bērnitz^r, p'ērangi^s majum.
Dastamazēt darav^t sim u abreshum.
Kērnirēt shimshat ê, matnirēt ê mum.
Tsutz'ēt baghch'a^u unis, mech'kēt ê qamish.

Is kanch'um im MERANIN
ēSkēspnakan^r meranin.
T'ugh dostirēn shatanan,
T'ēshnamik'ēn meṛanin.
Asi t'e is k'u akhper, k'u mern indzi mer anin.

Bemurmvat' iar, khilk'ēn gēlkhēs mi tani.
Dardirēs shatat'āv k'ani me, k'ani.
Gidim vur, iar, dun indz laigh ch'is ani.
Dun me t'ak'avur is, is me khi(gh)ch davrish^w.

Is kanch'um im MASANIN
SE u AIB mas anin^x.

.....
.....^y
Saiat'noven k'u iarn ê, t'eguz masnemas anin.

Dastamazēt nman ê^z sunbu^{aa} susani.
Vakhum im t'e sērēt sirtēs^{bb} kēs ani.
Ku mir(n)im^{cc}, êl indzi pēs^{dd} ch'is tesani.
K'u Saiat'noven im, mi ani qimish^{ee}.

The main puns of the poem turn around the syllable *an*. This has been interpreted as a form of the personal name Ana, in the opinion of the present writer correctly, as will be discussed below. To save time and space later, this interpretation has been incorporated, with the necessary parentheses, in the translation which follows:

o. The conjunction *u* 'and' needs to be supplied twice to give a verse of the required seven syllables. **p.** H reads *k'ashi*, adding an otiose syllable to the required heptasyllabic hemistich. **q.** T; I *hutit ashkhark'*. **r.** I; T *brinitz'*. **s.** I; T *t'rangi*. **t.** T; *dasta dasta mazi*. **u.** T; I *boit' sarvi*. **v.** T *iskipnakh*. **w.** I omits this stanza, by an oversight repeating in its place st. 2 of the quatrains. **x.** This verse appears to have only six syllables, one short of the required seven. Hasrat'yan solves the problem by reading *AIB* as two syllables (thus, *AYIB*), as he does in st. 5, v. 2. **y.** Two verses are missing from the text in T here. For Hasrat'yan's ingenious suggested reading, see the Commentary below. **z.** T *dastamazt nman*, I *mazert' k'u nman e*. **aa.** I; T *snbu*. **bb.** I *sert' sirts*; T *sert sirt* (one syllable short). **cc.** T *mirim*; I *mirum*. **dd.** T; I *indzi pes el*. **ee.** I; T *qimish*.

I CRY LALANIN

I cry LALANIN

That (these letters) may form a ruby (*lal anin*) from Badeshkhân.

Woe, if I die from yearning for you,

(And) they strike dumb (*lal anin*) my Nightingale tongue,

(And) my friends stand far off from (our) enemies,^a and (then) come and weep!^b

Scarlet silk becomes you, gracious one.

Come, bind a gold-laced ribbon^c on your brow!

Take (your) gilded scissors in your hand,

Arrange your curly locks^d.

I cry YARANIN

That Allegory and Ballad be conjoined (*yar anin*).

Who said that in unlawful wise

Upon your beloved they should inflict a wound (*yar anin*)?

The Gospel gives to the humble man its blessing (*yerani-n*)^e.

Precious to behold is the newly-fragrant rouge^f.

The luxuriant ^g rose-bush berefts the Nightingale of his senses^h.

a. Reading *iadirên* 'from enemies' rather than the text's *iadirên* 'the enemies': it is not his enemies who are likely to shed tears over his death. b. The puns in vv. 1, 3, 4 concern PT *lâl* 'ruby', PT *lâl* 'dumb', and Arm. *lal* 'weeping'. c. *muqaish*, T *muqayyesh* '(pseudo-Arabic from T. *qâish* ['leather strap'])', made into a strip, esp. wire flattened into a narrow strip, also (a cloth, etc.) embroidered with such flattened wire' (Redhouse). d. T uses a Georgian word, *kav-i* 'lock of hair', I the Armenian *tsam* 'idem'. As mentioned above, the rhyme scheme of this stanza shows it to have been originally the opening stanza of an independent composition. e. The puns are on Arm. *yar* 'joined'; TAz *yara* 'wound'; Arm. *erani* 'blessed (be)', cf. *Matt.* 5,5 (the pronunciation with the prothetic y- is not typical of SN's Tiflis dialect, cf. *êrkat* 'iron' in *Amen sazi...*, st. 2 v. 3; the poet had recourse to what he possibly considered a superior pronunciation, as heard in church). f. *novabu*, a new formation by SN on P T *nov* and PT *bû* 'smell, fragrance', cf. Arm. lwd. from Iranian *anushaboyr* 'sweet-smelling'; *najar*, AP *najâr* 'red paint for the face, rouge', connected with APT *nijâr*, *nujâr* 'root, origin, diversity, colour', AP *najr* 'nature, origin, root, colour' (S). Hasrat'yan makes heavy weather of this, wrongly stating that T has the reading *nova-bunajar*, though the space, as in I, is clear, and amends to an unintelligible *novabin ajar* (pp. 21, 72, 238). The colour theme is taken up by the rose-bush in the next verse. g. *t'op*, used as T *top top* 'in masses', not otherwise attested as a qualificative adjective; cf. Arm. dialectal *t'op' anel* 'collect (tr.)', *t'op' linel* 'collect (intr.)', T *toplamaq* 'collect (tr.)', *toplaniq* 'collected, massed together'. Hasrat'yan, p. 289, suggests also Arm. *t'up* 'bush', but although -o- becomes in the Tiflis dialect -u-, the converse is not the case. h. T *gëzhvetz'nogh* 'rendering stupid (*gizh*)'; I *spanogh* 'killing' (less satisfactory, though preferred by Hasrat'yan, though why he thinks that the three syllables of T's reading 'ruins the metre', when *spanogh*, pron. *ěspanogh*, also comprises three, and needs them in the hendecasyllabic verse as he prints it, is unclear.

Your eyes are enclosed (jewels) within your eyebrowsⁱ.
The hair of your lashes is gold inlaid with gold^j.

I cry ZAIANIN

That (the letters) form N and A and Z (*ZAI anin*).

You have said, 'In unlawful wise

They cause the lover's heart to perish (*zay anin*).'

The Shah had withdrawn^k, he would not counter this harm (*zayan-in*)^l suffered by me.

Your fragrance has captivated the (whole) world, (like that of) French
confiture.^m

Your hair has turned to silverⁿ and silk.

Your back is (straight as) the box-tree^o, your fingers white as wax.

Your bosom is a garden^p, your waist is (slender as) a reed.

I cry MERANIN

To the primary rennet (*meran-in*)^q.

i. T. lit. 'your eyes to your eyebrows have come out *muhajar*'; I 'your eyebrows to your eyes have come out *muhajar*'. AP *mahjir*, *miḥjar* 'a garden planted with trees; the socket, environs, or corner of the eyes; an eye peeping out from under a veil' (S); AT *muhajjar* 'inclosed, forbidden to the public, (the moon) surrounded by a halo' (R), show that T's reading is to be preferred; for a similar image, cf. T *qaqlamaq* lit. 'furnish with eyebrows (*qaş*)', i.e. 'set (a stone) in a ring' (Redhouse). Hasrat'yan prefers Ioane's reading; but the Arabic forms are passive, indicating something enclosed, not enclosing. j. I *zar oskov zarnish*, cf. P *zar-nishân* 'figures of gold inlaid in steel, gilded, set in gold', P *zar andar zar* 'gold within gold', 'profusely gilded' (S). k. *k'ash linel* is not listed in the dictionaries, but must be equivalent to *k'ash gal* 'crawl, wander' (Malkhasyantz'), cf. Cl. Arm. *i k'a(r)sh gnal* 'crawl, creep on he belly' (Bedrossian), though the term is a temerarious one to apply to royal behaviour. l. The puns comprise PT *nâz* 'grace, charm', APT *zâ'î* 'wandering, lost, perished', and (though the quality of the first vowel has been ignored) PT *ziyân* 'harm'. m. *majum*; G *majun-i* 'a jam-like preserved restorative made from opium and hashish and mixed with aloe and other herbs, to which the rich add ambergris, musk, etc.' (D. Ch'ubinashvili), 'jam, or medicinal gruel (varenie, kashka lekarstvennaya), $\mu\alpha\nu\tau\zeta\omicron\upsilon\nu\iota$ [electuary]' (N. Ch'ubinashvili), Az *mäjün* 'paste, sweetmeat' (Äzizbäy), APT *ma'jün*. The word is used in connection with the beloved by Sayat'-Nova's contemporary Ottoman poetess, Fitnet Khânim: *ma'jün-i la'l-i yârda dir şîḥḥat ay ṭabîb* 'In the electuary of the beloved's ruby lip is health, O physician', ed. Gibb, VI, p. 294; Gibb, in his note to his translation, IV, p. 157, n. 5, defines it as 'a medicated preparation of sugar, spices, etc., something like a soft toffee. In that prepared for the use of the Sultan and other very great people, pearls, rubies, emeralds and coral reduced to a powder were occasionally mixed. Here Fitnet compares the beloved's red lips to this health-giving sweetmeat or confection into which rubies enter.' The basic meaning is A 'kneaded' (R). The word occurs in Rust'aveli (v. 883), etc. (D. Ch'); cf. p. 271 n. 81, where it is written in Georgian characters as *majun*. n. *sim*, PT *sîm* 'silver' (from Gk. *asêmon*). o. *shimshat*, PT *shimshâd* 'any tall and upright tree, box-tree, the graceful figure of a mistress', cf. *shimshâd-bâlâ*, *shimshâd-qad* 'lofty as a box-tree' (S). p. T; I your stature is (that of) a poplar. q. Arm. *meran*, *mêran*, otherwise *makard* 'a small quantity of yoghurt (*matsun*) which is mixed with heated milk, whereby the milk curdles, coagulates, becomes [fresh] *matsun*' (Malkhasyantz'). The idea is that this basic leaven should cause his friends to increase like healthy yoghurt, and his enemies, like the agents

May friends multiply,
May enemies die (*meṛanin*).

I have said^r that I am your brother, may they make your mother a mother
to us (both) (*mer anin*).

Ungenerous^s beloved, do not drive the sense from my head!
My sufferings have increased, how many, how many!
I know, beloved, you will not consider me worthy of you^t
You are a King, I a por dervish.

I cry MASANIN
That S and A form part (of it) (*mas anin*).^u

.....
.....^v

Sayat^e-Nova is your beloved, though they keep us apart (*masnê mas anin*).

Your coiffure is like the hyacinth lily (*susani*)^w.
I am afraid your love will cut my heart in half (*kês ani*).
I am dying, you will see (*tesani*) my like no more.
I am your Sayat^e-Nova, do not cut me (*mi ani*) into little pieces^x.

of dissolution, to perish. A pun *mer Anin* 'to our Ana' may be concealed here. **r.** *asi*, possibly a root aorist more typical of Western Armenian; or is it Cl. Arm. *asi* 'it is said'? **s.** *bemurmvat*^e, P *bî-murâwat* 'without generosity', cf. T *mürüvetsiz* 'ungenerous, without consideration for others' (Redhouse). **t.** *laigh*, APTAz *lâ'iq*, *layiq*, 'worthy', Az. *layiq görmäk* 'consider worthy, suitable'; *lit.* 'you will not make me worthy'. Though it might be straining the force of *anel*, the grammar might just permit a double meaning: 'you will not act (in a fashion) worthy of me.' **u.** G. Asatur, *cit.* H p. 238, proposed that S and A stand for Sayat^e-Nova and Ana. **v.** Two verses are here missing from the text in T. Hasrat'yan ingeniously proposes *Is k'iznitz' ch'im heṛana* (better *hiṛana*) / *Guzê indz anmas anin* 'I shall not depart from you, / Should any wish to make me without a part (of you)'. *anmasn* is defined by Malkhasyantz^e as 'having no part, transient, distant, foreign, without communion, excommunicated'. **w.** Sayat^e-Nova uses here PT *sûsan* (Arabic *sausân*) 'lily' in place of the usual Armenian (from Syriac) *shushan*. The APT *sunbul*, without special epithets, is the hyacinth (*hyacinthus orientalis*), a member of the *Liliaceae* family (A.K. Bedevian, *Illustrated polyglott dictionary of plant names*, Cairo, 1936, no. 1873 (it can also mean an 'ear of corn' (S), the only meaning for Az *sûnbül* listed by Äzizbäy). The image, based upon its small, tightly curled flowers, is common in Armenian (*sach'êd sêmbul* 'your hair is hyacinthine', Naghash Yovnat'an, *loc. cit.*, p. 42), and Persian ('(Pour Manuchehri la jacinthe) c'est la chevelure bouclée qui est belle, c'est pourquoi la jacinthe boucle ses cheveux au jardin', C.H. de Fouchécour, *La description de la nature dans la poésie lyrique persane du XIe siècle*, Paris, 1969, p. 79. One finds the same image already in Homer: *κάδ δὲ κάρητος ἰ οὔλας ἦκε κόμας, ὑακινθίνῳ ἄνθει ὁμοίως* (The freshly bathed Odysseus) 'let down the curly locks of his head (which were) like the hyacinth flower' (*Od.*, 6, 230-1). With the appositional compound structure *snbul susan* 'hyacinth lily', cf. *blbul lizus* 'my nightingale tongue' above, st. 1 v. 4, and Cl. Arm. *i hur kaṛs* 'on a chariot of fire' (2 *Kings* 2,11), *hur her* 'hair of fire' (Song of Vahagn, apud Movses Khorenatz'i). **x.** *qimish*, past participle of T *qiymaq* 'mince, chop up, slaughter, fix a dowry, find it in one's heart to do an injury, make a sacrifice to' (Redhouse). For Az *qiymaq* Äzizbäy lists only the meanings 'not to be sparing, to take liberties, wink'.

The *tejnîs* (*tecnis*) was by Sayat'-Nova's day well-established in Turkish poetry, e.g. in that of the 16th-century Öksüz Dede,⁷² and in Georgian, notably in the *Majama*⁷³ of Irakli's ancestor T'eimurazi I (1589-1663), who had in fact a better claim to have introduced his country to 'Persian ways' than Sayat'-Nova. The quintains of *I cry Lalanin* is full of puns of a type close to the Greek *paronomasia* as defined by Cicero:⁷⁴ *parva verbi immutatio in littera posita* 'a small change placed in the letter(s) of a word', or possibly, this phrase itself being ambiguous, 'a small change in the letters of a word (as they are placed)', i.e. in their position. Sayat'-Nova's poem juggles with the syllable *an*, which changes its significance in accordance with different interpretations of its context. Thus the verbal form *anin* (= Standard Eastern Armenian *anen* 'may they make'), usually used as a serial verb like P *kardan* and T *etmek*, occurs nine times in the quintains, while the quatrains contain the tell-tale syllable seven times in *nazani*, *mi tani*, *me k'ani*, *ch'is ani*, *susani*, *kês ani*, and *tesani*. The cryptic forms *lalanin*, *yananin*, *zayanin*, *meranin*, *masanin* called out by the poet are analysed, taken part, and given various suggested interpretations, themselves not free from further puns. Thus *lal anin* can mean both 'may they form a ruby' and 'may they strike dumb'; *yananin* — *yar anin* 'may they conjoin', *yanan-in* 'to the beloved' (PT *yârân*) (also as the equivalent of the Turkish *yarana* '(poem) to the beloved', one of Sayat'-Nova's favourite love-song genres), 'to one who splits asunder (T *yanan*), and, for those who think they have guessed the basic intent of the poem, 'to the beloved An'. *meranin* may be analysed as 'to/for the (primary) *meran*', i.e. *makard* 'the basic coagulant added to milk to form yoghurt' (Malkhasyantz'), translated roughly above as 'rennet' as more intelligible to Europeans;

⁷² E.g. *Bu garip gönlümün nesin sorarsın / Herdem yâr elinden yaralı sine / Yâr merhem etmezse unulmaz yârem / Ölürde giderim yaralı sine* (ed. M.F. Köprülüzade, XVI — *ncı asır sonuna kadar türk sazşairleri*, Istanbul, 1930, p. 34) 'What do you wish to know of my errant heart? / If to a bosom wounded at every turn by the hand of the beloved / The beloved gives no balm, my wound will never heal. / In Death I shall go wounded to the grave.' Here, with *yâr eli* 'the beloved's hand' already punning with *yaralı* 'wounded', *yaralı sine* 'to the wounded bosom' may further be interpreted as *yaralı sin-e* 'wounded to the grave'. Subsequent stanzas of the poem offer (*anin*) *yaralısına* 'to the one he/she has wounded', more puns on *yâr eli* 'the beloved's hand' and *yaralı* 'wounded', puns on *yara* 'wound', *yara* 'strength', *yâre* 'to the beloved'. *Yârlı* 'possessed of a beloved' has been missed.

⁷³ In st. 3 (ed. A. Baramidze and G. Jakobia, Tiflis, 1934, p. 113) the rhyme word *isara* is to be interpreted *is ara* 'it (is) not', *i-sar-a* 'it is fenced in', *isara* 'a kind of plant (Sagittaria)' or 'promontory', *isar-a* 'it is an arrow'.

⁷⁴ *De oratore*, 2,63.

the form *meranin* predicates a form divergent from the poet's normal dialectal *mirnin* for it to mean 'may (our enemies) die'. The poet's Georgian and Georgian-speaking Armenian listeners would doubtless also think of Merani (*merani* 'steed'), 'the Pegasus of Georgian legend';⁷⁵ this would be paralleled by Sayat'-Nova's telling his beloved, 'Fiery, emerging from the sea, you are (Rustahm's steed) Râsh and gazelle unto me'.⁷⁶ We shall return to the *masanin* of the defective stanza 5 which is of great significance in the solving of the main riddle of the poem, which resides in the forms called out in the first verses of the quintains.

Lalanin can also be interpreted as 'the ruby An', the form *Anin* representing the Eastern Armenian dative/animate accusative of the name *An*. *An* as a form of the more usual feminine name *Anna* is not listed in his *Dictionary of Armenian personal names* by H. Ačaṙean, but it is already attested as borne by the queen of King Leo II/III of Cilicia, the sponsor of the Gospels known by her name copied at Akner in 1272 (Jerusalem, St. James, MS no. 2563), in the Western form *Keran* (written in the Classical style as *Geran*), i.e. 'the Lady (κυρία) An.' It would be possible to construe it as the defined nom.acc.voc. of a form *Ani*, listed as a form current in Agulis by Ačaṙean, with which one may compare the nominative *Anên* listed by him as a nominative of *Ana*.⁷⁷ *Ana* is the usual Georgian form of the name, but a form *Ani* would be in line with Georgian examples in *-i*, e.g. *T'amari*, *Mariami*.⁷⁸ In like fashion, *Yaranin* could mean 'the Beloved An' (*Yar An-in*), *Zayanin* 'the Wandering Ana' (*Zay An-in*), *Meranin* 'Our Ana' (*Mer An-in*), *Masanin* 'the Noble Ana' (*Mas An-in*, *P mas* 'noble, great, lord', Steingass). The identification of the syllable *An* with the name *Anna* was first made at the beginning of this century by G. Asatur.⁷⁹ The *S* and *A* that the poet

⁷⁵ M. Wardrop, *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, p. 17, n. 5, re st. 96, in which Tariel's mount is said to be like Merani.

⁷⁶ *Krakê, tsovenen dus ekats, řash u jeyran is indz ama*, in *Ashkharumës akh ch'im k'ashi* 'In this world I shall sigh no sigh', Hasrat'yan, (Arm.) no. 24, p. 37.

⁷⁷ See H. Ačaṙean, *Hayotz' anjnanunneri bařaran*, t. 1, Erevan 1942, pp. 168 (*Anna, Ani*), 145 (*Ana, Anên*, which he prefers to explain as *T ana* 'mother', though baby girls are unlikely to be so named). Given S.N.'s well-attested disregard of the termination *-a* in declension (cf. *agh-er* as plural of *agha*), *Anin* might be the animate acc. of *Ana*. The form of the name here concealed may be of importance in identifying the person concerned.

⁷⁸ Two forms recorded by Castelli, *Relazione e album dei schizzi sulla Georgia del secolo XVII*, ed. B. Giorgadze, *Tz'nobebi da albomi Sak'art'velos shesakheb*, T'bilisi, 1976, pll. 50, 58 respectively.

⁷⁹ *Cit.* H pp. 237-238, but without an exact reference. G. Asatur is listed in Hasrat'yan's bibliography, pp. 338-339, as the author of articles in *Azgagrakan Handês*,

extracts from *Masanin* are interpreted by him to refer to *S(ayat'-Nova)* and *A(na)* respectively. (His view that of the Z, N, and A extracted by the poet from *Zayanin* the N and the A refer to *N(ova)* and *A(na)* is much less plausible, *Nova* by itself being a then unique and wholly inadequate signature). A similar alphabetic conceit occurs in the undated Georgian song *Shent'an mitom vlaparakob* 'The reason that I speak with you':

Sayat'nova qmaa sheni
Sakhit'a khar mt'vare-mzeni
Sakheli mak'vs Sani T'eni
*Vinis bolos Ani vnakhe*⁸⁰

'Sayat'nova is thy servant.
 By thy face thou art Moon and Sun.
 A name I have (with) S and T'.
 After V I saw A.'

These letters could refer exclusively to the poet's own pen-name, *SayaT'noVA*. But it is possible that the A, especially by virtue of its highly suggestive Georgian appellation *Ani*, more expressive in the context than its Armenian equivalent *Ayb*, refers to the lady who is the recipient of the poem. The best traditions of the troubadours' *trobar clus* would require something more from the poet than picking out four letters from his name: it must *mean* something. Before discussing what it might mean one must consider the possible significance of the two verses missing from the *Masanin* quintain, for one cannot seriously believe that the poet's invention failed him at such an important juncture as the *makhlas*, the signing-off stanza of this section of the poem. Hasrat'yan's proposed filling of this lacuna, noted above, has the essential merit of adding nothing of great moment. One is reluctant, fallible though the profession may be, to impute the gap to the scribe. One suspects rather that when the *Tetrak*, in which it is sure that Sayat'-Nova had a hand, came to be written in 1765, five or six years after his dismissal from the Georgian court, the poet removed, or had removed,

t. 10, 1903, *Banber Hayast. Git. Inst.*, t. 1-3, 1921-2, *Khorh. Hayastan*, nos. 85, 87, 88, 188, 1926, *Nor ughi*, 1930, nos. 4-5, *Khor. grakanut'yun*, 1936, no. 1, all publications unavailable to me. The details above are taken from H pp. 237-238, who finds 'no objection to Asatur's clever and logical explanation'. I have been unable to consult M. Abeghyan, *Sayat'-Nova ev nra siro steghtsvatsē'* [Sayat'-Nova and his love poetry]', *Grakan T'ert'ē*, 1940, no. 30, referred to by H p. 238, note.

⁸⁰ B p. 60.

these two verses from the record, perhaps as being, in retrospect, too painful in the light of his personal tragedy, perhaps also too revealing with respect to the exact identity of the Dark Lady concealed behind the verses.

There is no evidence that this poem involved Sayat'-Nova in any immediate unpleasantness such as would justify Hasrat'yan in linking it to the complaint *Dun ên gëłkhên*, and in his dating this undated poem at 1753. A coquettish love-song dated 1st April 1754, which purports to be by the poet's beloved, suggests even a degree of reciprocity:

*Indz siretz'ir, êshkhên ėngar, khaghi davt'ar im k'iz ama...
T'ak urish gozal ch'ĕ siris, ighrarov yar im k'iz ama...
Du bēlbul is, is karmir vart'...
Me p'uk'ĕr ėtentz' dimatz'i, shutov Hēndastan mi eha...
Tsalē davt'arĕt, ghut'in di, rang u ruk'ar im k'iz ama.⁸¹*

'You have come to love me, you have fallen in love, I am a book of verses for you ...

As long as you love no other beauty, I am a faithful beloved for you ...

You are the Nightingale, I the crimson Rose...

Tarry a little while here, do not hurry away to India ...

Close your book, put it in its case. I am a coloured tassel for you.'

One must, of course, beware of reading too much into this with respect to the poet's biography. April 1st, which the Armenians also honour in the traditional European and Russian fashion,⁸² is not a date suggestive of great seriousness, and the beloved of the poem may be without any substance whatsoever, an imaginary figure in an April Fool party. What the poem undoubtedly indicates, however, is that the poet at this date in 1754 did not feel himself to be under a cloud.

There exists another somewhat neglected poem in which one may justifiably suspect a play on forms of the name An(ne), and this is dated at the equivalent of 1758, well on the way, as we know by hindsight, towards the poet's downfall in 1759. This is the Azeri *Dedum, Yar*,

⁸¹ T p. 131, H p. 36.

⁸² Given the mobility of the traditional Armenian calendar, in which the equivalent of Julian or Gregorian April 1st can eventually fall on any day of any month from Nawasard 1st on, the *Aprili mēkin hanak* 'April 1st joke', listed by Malkhasyantz', must be a comparatively recent introduction, probably via Russia, since the expression translates Russian *pervoaprel'skaya shutka*, and not, for example, French *poisson d'avril*. There is no evidence for the custom among Tiflis Armenians of the 18th century, but Russian influence was then on the increase. I can trace no corresponding expression or practice in Georgian, which need not be relevant, the poem being in Armenian for an Armenian audience.

dardua dozabilmanam ‘I said, Beloved, I cannot bear my suffering’, dated in the *Tetrak*, with no indication of day and month, at 446 of the chronicon.⁸³ A marginal note in Georgian describes it merely as a *t’aslibi*, but it is clear that it qualifies as much as ‘I cry *Lalanin*’ as a *tejni*s or ‘allegory’, since the principal rhyme words, *saramani*, *yaramani*, *naramani*, *kharamani*, *zaramani*, *varamani*, all containing the syllable *-an-*, are not normal forms in Azeri, and are open to several interpretations. The poem is not included by Arasli in his selection, perhaps owing to its lack of immediate intelligibility and its peculiar forms, and Hasrat’yan has seen no especial significance in it, rendering the cryptic forms merely as *nar*, *aman-aman* ‘fire, alas, alas!’, which is an over-simplification of a complex problem.⁸⁴ The poem, in Georgian script in the *Tetrak*, reads as follows:

Dedum, Iar, dardua dozabilmanam.
Ach’tun qan damarum; saramani bil.
Osanun qahrui aid yazabilmanam.
Sinam yaralanmish; yaramani bil.

Q(o)rban olim sia zilp’un nazina.
Int’izarem m(a)h jamalun jamina.
nawap’il t’okhindum eskhun shamina.
yandirma p’arvani; naramani bil.

qanlu maral k’imi daghdan olmisham.
ich’tum eskh qadasin, saghdan olmisham.
man qarib bulbul, baghdan olmisham.
zay et’ma qonch’ami; kharamani bil.

Aghzunda(n) qosha khala musht(ar)am.
labundan busisuz bala mushtaram.
.....shala mushtaram.
San zarbab gei(n)ja i, zaramani (bil).

K’ovul iardan gelur qadalar bir gun.
ia sani iaralar, ia da(gh)lar bir gun.
akhër bu iar sani badalar bir gun.
manda Sayat’novan varamani bil.

‘I said, Beloved, I cannot bear my suffering!
 You have opened my blood-vessels, know pardon for (my) head.
 About the dejection (caused by) your disdain, I cannot write.
 My breast is wounded. Know pardon (spare) (my) wound.

⁸³ T pp. 83-84.

⁸⁴ H p. 173. The poem is otherwise elegantly translated into the Tiflis Armenian dialect, retaining the hendekasyllabic metre and the rhyme-scheme. The considerable poetic talent of Hasrat’yan, who totally captures the spirit of Sayat’-Nova’s verse, merits him an important status in the history of Armenian literature.

May I be a sacrifice to the grace of your black love-lock.
 I thirst for the chalice of your moon(like) beauty.
 I have performed great acts of devotion for the candle of your love.
 Do not burn up the moth: know pardon (be sparing with) the fire.

Like a bloodstained gazelle I have come down from the mountain.
 I have drunk from the cup of your love, and have got well again.
 I am the Wandering Nightingale, I have come from the garden.
 Do not harm my rosebud. Know pardon (be sparing with) the thorn.

I am a buyer for the pair of moles by your mouth.
 Without a kiss from your lips I am a buyer for honey.
 I am a buyer for your shawl.
 Dressing in brocade, know pardon (spare) the gold.

O heart, from the beloved disasters come one day,
 Either wounds or burns (hurt) you one (other) day.
 Finally the Beloved (inflicts on) you (fatal) blights.
 In me, Sayat'-Nova, there is safety. Know it!

The above translation represents only one way in which the poem may be understood. In the first stanza *saramani bil* may be analysed as *sar aman-i bil* 'know (my?) head's *amân*', in which the latter APTAz word may be interpreted as 'security, safety, protection, quarter, pardon, mercy' (Steingass), 'safe conduct in an enemy's country' (Redhouse), while in Azeri, apart from 'pardon, alas!', the meanings 'definite period of time, breathing-space, possibility' ('srok, peredîshka, vozmozhnost', Äzizbây), are recorded, making the translations 'know safety, pardon, give protection, a breathing space, fix a definite period, for (my) head (self, G *t'av*) possible. An analysis *sar amânî* as 'My head (self) (is) *amânî* 'security, trust' (Steingass), 'an alien under protection in the land of Islam' (Redhouse), are also possible. Much less likely is an Azeri meaning '(My) head (self) is temporary, unstable' (vremennîï, neprochnîï, Äzizbây). Interpreting *sar* as a vocative, 'O head' (as *k'ovul* 'O heart' in stanza 5), one could read, 'O my head (cf. the probably 1759 Georgian poem *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head'), know (find) protection, security'. -*mani* might also be interpreted as P *ma'nî* (the regular form is APTAz معنى *ma'ná*) 'sense, meaning' (Steingass), so that one could read *sara ma'ni bil* 'know the meaning to "head"', unlikely in this phrase, but perhaps possible in others. All these meanings, however, lie on the surface. With a slight grammatical irregularity — and Sayat'-Nova is not always meticulous in the matter of Azeri grammar — the phrase could have what may be the most deeply concealed meaning, *saram* (for *saramî*), *Ani, bil* 'My head, Ani, know!'

thus revealing the real motive, a cryptic address to a Lady Anne, behind the series of curious Azeri forms in *-amani*. A parallel pun involving Az. *bilmäk* 'know' (*bilmänäm* 'I do not know', *bil mänäm* 'know I am he') was allegedly made by Sayat'-Nova when a monk at Haghpāt according to the story, related by Akhverdyan but not believed, which we have reproduced above.⁸⁵ It is too crude to qualify for the *Se non è vero, è ben trovato* category, but it was knowledge of Sayat'-Nova's propensity for the sort of word-play in the present poem that inspired its authors.

So it is with the subsequent compound rhymes in *-aramani bil. yaramani bil* may mean, as translated above, '(my) wound's pardon know', i.e. 'spare my wound'; or, 'know the meaning to "wound"'; or 'my wound, Ani, know! *Naramani bil* 'Know pardon for, be sparing with the fire'; or, 'know the meaning to fire'; or, 'my fire (the fire that burns me), Ani, know!'. *Kharamani bil* 'be sparing with the thorn', or, 'know the meaning to "thorn"', or, 'My thorn (the thorn that wounds me), Ani, know!'. *Zaramani bil*, 'Know pardon for, be sparing with, gold', or, 'Know the meaning to "gold"', or, 'My gold (my golden worth), Ani, know!'.

In the final verse, the poet's traditional *takhalluṣ*, the veils are suddenly thinner, the tone more direct. It is still just possible to interpret *varamani bil* as 'Know pardon for, spare, (my) burden (P *wâr*), or 'know the meaning to "burden", even, since there are many examples where Sayat'-Nova ignores final, even long, vowels, 'know the meaning to the modesty, abstinence (APT *warâ*', Steingass, also 'being of no account', Redhouse) in Sayat'-Nova', or, 'In Sayat'-Nova, my modesty, abstinence, Ani, know!' The crystal clear construction *mändä var* 'in me there is, I have', however, draws immediate attention to something Sayat'-Nova possesses of which the beloved should take cognisance, and the meanings 'In me, Sayat'-Nova, there are desires (APT *amânî*, Steingass, Redhouse), know them!', or, 'In me, Sayat'-Nova, there is a protected alien (*amânî*), know it!' (a statement very pertinent to the position of an Armenian minstrel singing in Azeri at the Georgian court), or, 'In me, Sayat'-Nova, there is security, trust (P *amânî*, Steingass), know it!', are possible. So also, however, is the direct appeal

⁸⁵ Pp. 47-48, n. 3; Hasrat'yan, p. xxxv, considers it natural (*i harkê*) that Akhverdyan gave it no credence; but is it of significance that few of Sayat'-Nova's commentators, including the present, can let the story pass without comment?

to the beloved by name, viz. 'In me, Sayat^ʿNova, my existence, condition (Az *var* 'sostoyanie', also 'possessions' (imushchestvo), Äzizbäy), Ani, know it!' The last two alternatives, where *var* is interpreted in its most common Azeri sense, seem the most likely.

In this poem we are confronted with a thick smokescreen of multiple meanings. Through it all, however, one syllable appears clearly to emerge. It may be that our interpretations are tantamount to seeing faces in the fire. But the syllable is there, and for all our caution, will not be ignored.

The evidence of the ubiquitous syllables *an* and *ani* in the above Armenian and Azeri poems points fairly convincingly to a lady called An(na) or, in a Georgian form, perhaps hypocoristic, Ani. It was the view of the poet's Russian translator Valeri Bryusov that this was in fact King Irakli's sister, she who married Prince Demetre Orbeliani in 1744, and at whose wedding Sayat^ʿ-Nova, as has been considered above, may have performed and sung his Georgian ode, *The garden has filled with nightingales*. This identification has on the one hand been rejected as a romantic fantasy by Baramidze,⁸⁶ and on the other congealed into certainty among many in Armenia, for example Gaysaryan.⁸⁷ There is certainly much indication in Sayat^ʿ-Nova's poems that his beloved was of a higher social status than himself, and connected with the Court. In the Armenian ode *Bedaslin vur khosetz^ʿnis* of 1759, the beloved is addressed as 'king', dwells, richly attired, in palatial surroundings, and makes the poet feel 'low-born' or 'of bad blood' (*bedasli*).⁸⁸ The Armenian ode *Modēt nēstoghēn* 'He who sits near you' describes the recipient as 'gold from the factory of a king', and in continuing 'the tree will not deviate from its kind' (Like tree, like fruit), suggests noble, perhaps royal, blood. Ioane's note that it was apparently addressed to 'a noble, renowned friend' that the poet may have had (his use of perfect/dubitatives must, however, be of significance) may have had a basis in fact, important with respect to the poem's late date of 1758.⁸⁹ An undated Georgian poem lamenting the obstacles that separate lovers, with the in the circumstances very apt first verse 'They speak of a mountain between one world and another: it is true', contains the verse 'they speak of the sister of the Emperor of China and Central Asia' in which it would not be

⁸⁶ *romanuli ambavi*, p. 97.

⁸⁷ P. 268.

⁸⁸ T p. 136, I fol. 67a, H (Arm) no. 44, p. 61.

⁸⁹ See below, Chapter Five, p. 154-7.

implausible, in fact, given the manner in which the poet elsewhere refers to the Georgian king, fairly natural, to interpret the Emperor as Irakli, and his sister as Ana.⁹⁰

Is the beloved of 1758/9, however, identical with her of 1753? There are signs in the poems that such fidelity on the part of Sayat'-Nova is not improbable. He may, as mooted above, have performed at the marriage of Ana to Prince Demetre Orbeliani in 1744. In the 1758 plaintive *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov*, after saying 'I have gone around like a noble of the King for ten years,'⁹¹ which would date his court appointment at 1748-9, he says that for seven of these ten years he came saz in hand like a wandering minstrel to the beloved addressed in the poem: *Okhtën tari êl man gu k'am sazën dziṛis gharibi pês*. This suggests that his love had blossomed forth, to be expressed publicly, however covertly, in 1751-2, a year or two before the cryptic poem of 1753. The 1759 ode *Ajab k'u sirtën ov shinitz'*, an unhappy complaint composed in the last year of his career as court minstrel, suggests that his beloved has ignored him for the past four years: *Hentz' gidim, t'ê ch'ors tari ê k'aghak'ën k'arvan ch'ê mti* 'I just know that it is four years since a caravan entered the City (Tiflis).'⁹² This, in veiled terms, seems to indicate that the love affair had come to an end, as far as the beloved was concerned, in 1755-6.

What might well fit Ana, the sister of the King who wed in 1744, is that she would not be in the first flush of youth in 1753. A verse in the quatrain section of *Lalanin* suggests even that his beloved's hair was turning grey: *Dastamazët darav sim u abreshum* 'Your hair has turned to silver and silk'.⁹³ The later verse in the same poem comparing her hair to the hyacinth lily⁹⁴ may not refer only to the tight curls suggested by the hyacinth's blossoms, but to the white colour of the best known variety, to which Homer refers in describing the contrast between the silver hair of the ageing Odysseus with his bronzed body: 'He let down the crinkly locks of his head, which were like the flower of the hyacinth, as when a skilled man, trained by Hephaistos, surrounds gold with silver.'⁹⁵ On the other hand, Sayat'-Nova might be referring merely to the court

⁹⁰ *Ch'in mach'inis khelmtsip'es das amboben, mart'alia*, in *Sop'elsa da sop'els shua mt'as amboben, mart'alia*, B p. 27.

⁹¹ St. 4, vv. 2-3, T p. 121; I fol. 67A, H (Arm) no. 31, p. 46.

⁹² St. 2, v. 3, H (Arm) no. 43, p. 60.

⁹³ 3rd quatrain, v. 2.

⁹⁴ 5th quatrain, v. 1.

⁹⁵ *Odyssey*, vi. 230-4.

custom, common in the 18th century at the Georgian court as at Versailles and Windsor, of powdering or otherwise silvering the hair. Ker-Porter, somehow visiting the ladies' public baths in Tiflis, found them 'attended by servants ... dyeing their hair or eyebrows, or finally painting or rather enamelling their faces'.⁹⁶ The first verse of a 1759 poem, though it contains a chronological link between the poet and his beloved and is, as all poems of this date, to be taken seriously, is, as usual, difficult to interpret: *Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak* 'May ye know that one year brought me and my beloved'.⁹⁷ The verb *berats* 'borne' is open to many interpretations. It could mean 'bought together' at the Court at T'elavi, thus in 1744 when Irakli was established as King of Kakhet'i. This was also the date of Ana's marriage to Prince Demetre Orbeliani, at which Sayat'-Nova is thought to have performed. It is more doubtful that it means that the poet and his beloved were born in the year: in that case *tsěnvats* 'born' rather than *berats* would have been more appropriate, and anyway metrically equivalent. The date usually accepted for Sayat'-Nova's birth is 1712, though some, as we have seen, have placed it at 1722. The latter date is more apt for that of Ana's birth, since that would make her twenty-two years old on her marriage in 1744, and accord with the dating of her birth 'in the early years of the 1720's', as Hasrat'yan records.⁹⁸ In 1712 she would have been thirty-two, an unlikely advanced age for a Caucasian girl to marry. But it would be rash to amend any dates concerning Sayat'-Nova on these grounds. The verse has involved us once again in a vicious circle, and it is far from certain that Princess Ana Orbeliani was the beloved in question.

Was the love affair in which Sayat'-Nova represents himself as involved ever a reality? Ann Boleyn apart, it is not rare for a highborn lady to fall in love with one of lowly rank. As 'la belle Cordière', the 16th-century French Sappho, Louize Labé, put it,

*Autres que nous, nonobstant leur hauteesse,
Ont enduré l'amoureuse rudesse:
Leur cœur hautein, leur beauté, leur lignage,
Ne les ont su préserver du servage
De dur Amour: les plus nobles esprits
En sont plus forts et plus soudein esprits.*⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cit. Allen, p. 358, n. 4.

⁹⁷ T p. 127, H (Arm.) no. 57, p. 75.

⁹⁸ See above, p. 78, n. 11. H p. 259.

⁹⁹ *Elégies et sonnets*, Jean Aumont: Paris, 1942, I, p. 17.

In 1769, the year of the poet's disgrace, Irakli's sister Ana would have been around 47 years old, not yet an age safe from amorous adventures (and we have the evidence of Ker-Porter that some of the ladies of the Georgian court were no better than they ought to be).¹⁰⁰ But whether or not she encouraged the poet's attentions, it would have been a cause of embarrassment to find herself identified as the subject of Sayat'-Nova's love poetry. If we, nigh on two and a half centuries later, can conjecture that the *An* of *Lanalin*, etc., refers to her, this would have been all the more suggestive to the members of the Georgian court, and surely not to the liking of her royal brother. Even if the 'affair' were purely imaginary and literary — or so interpreted by her, though the relevant poems of Sayat'-Nova have the ring of sincerity — something along the lines of Don Quixote's love for Dulcinea, which mirrored the reality of the medieval European knight's devotion to his chosen lady, who might well be someone else's wife, even the Queen, it might still not be convincing to dismiss it with a laugh. Any link to verses in Georgian poems such as *Sheni ubis brotseulis namali ver mishovia*¹⁰¹ 'The secret way to the pomegranates of your bosom I have not been able to reach' would have been most embarrassing: the disclaimer does not dispose of the wish.

There exists a report of a more earthy nature that the poet was involved in an adulterous affair with 'a furrier's wife named Talit'a, a Catholic, living in the Norashen quarter of Tiflis'. Ioseb Grishashvili, who records this in his Georgian biography of the poet, dates this as

¹⁰⁰ Rumours in Georgia have linked Irakli's sister Ana with Sayat'-Nova's younger contemporary, the poet Besiki (1750-1791), mainly on the grounds of his poem 'On Queen Ana' (see above, p. 78, n. 11). Besiki, about 28 years younger, is an unlikely swain, though his name was also connected with Maia, the mother-in-law of Solomon I of Imeret'i (1720-1789), who was presumably (I do not have her dates) ca. 20 years older than her son-in-law, and thus ca. 50 years older than Besiki. Age may be of little importance in troubadour love, but a biologically more likely candidate for Besiki's affections, as noted above, would be Maia's daughter Ana, née Orbeliani, the young wife of Solomon I with whom he had sought refuge when accused of impiety by the turbulent Catholicos Anton and exiled from K'art'li by Irakli. Donald Rayfield surmises that his affairs may have been the reason for his being sent by Solomon I, and his successor Solomon II, Uriah-like, on dangerous missions, on the last of which, to Jassy in 1791, he perished (Rayfield, *A history of Georgian Literature*, p. 123). Much seems to be in the realm of fancy, and it would not be surprising if the traditions concerning the two Tiflis poets and the two Anas have become entangled, in fiction rather than in fact. The presumable dates of Irakli's sister accord better with those of Sayat'-Nova, and the evidence of *Lanalin* and other poems indicate that the connection is not simply that the Ana of Besiki's poem has been attached to the elder poet.

¹⁰¹ *Ra zarbabi*, st. 5, v. 3, I fol. 31, B p. 48. See Addenda, p. 453.

'prior to his marriage',¹⁰² though K. Kekelidze, who in his *History of Ancient Georgian Literature* gives credence to the report, remarks that the date of the affair is difficult to determine, and that 'it is not to be excluded that he had this romantic connection after becoming a widower'.¹⁰³ Grishashvili's report cannot be rejected out of hand, not only because it would be a hopeless task to prove our poet, or most, a model of virtue, but because Grishashvili was himself a Tiflis poet and minstrel as well as a scholar, with his ear close to the ground, albeit it more than a century after Sayat'-Nova's death. It is, however, not possible to trace any reference to Talit'a in the poems, and one suspects that the furrier's wife had more in common with Byron's Maria Segati, wife of a Venetian hatter, than with Ann Boleyn, or a troubadour's idealised mistress. But it would be uncharitable to deny that Talit'a might have inspired many of Sayat'-Nova's finest lyrics, though anonymously. She could hardly, however, have been the cause of the minstrel's difficulties with the Georgian court: royal courts are not given to much stone-throwing, not so much out of respect for the Gospel as for fear of ricochets. Unless, of course, the honour of the monarch be involved. There is a slight possibility that Talit'a's Catholicism could have been charged

¹⁰² *Sayat'nova*, Tbilisi, 1918, p. 43. Talit'a's address as given by Grishashvili is anachronistic. There is no 'Norashen quarter' marked on available maps of Tiflis, though a *Norashenskaya ulitsa* 'N. Street' is marked on the 1887 Russian *Plan goroda Tiflisa s okrestnostyami*, A. Il'in: St. Petersburg (also on map Tiflis II, Baedeker's *Russland*, 1904), and this may have given its name to the business quarter comprising the *Armyanskii Bazar*, a suitable address for a furrier, and the Catholic Church in the *Katolicheskii Pereulok* parallel to *Norashenskaya Ulitsa*. This church, founded in the name of the BVM by Capuchin monks in the 14th century, had, according to information on Melikov's plan of Tiflis, St. Petersburg, 1878, been ruined 'by the last Persian raid' (of Agha Mahmad of 1795) and 'rebuilt by the Russian government'. The Armenian Church of the Mother of God (*Surb Astuatsatsin*) in the same area is listed *ibid.* as *Norash(?enskaya)*, similarly 'rebuilt'. These rebuildings took place after Sayat'-Nova's death, from which one may assume the road and area was not called *Norashen* in the poet's day. That they are so named, in Armenian rather than Georgian (*akhalshen*) underlines the Armenian character of the area, the mixed Georgian and Armenian quarter on the east bank of the Kur being Havlabar, the birthplace of the poet's mother where he lived his early years. While doubtless crossing the Maidanskii/Avlabarskii Bridge to perform in the Erivan Maidan and Armyanskii Bazar (and possibly on his way to the royal palace), the minstrel would have had the opportunity, if Grishashvili is to be credited, to encounter Talit'a by her husband's shop or on her way to or from Mass at St. Mary's Church. *Se non è vero, ...*

¹⁰³ *Dzvelis k'art'ulis literaturis istoria*, t. 2, T'bilisi, 1981, p. 682. The association is accepted by Donald Rayfield, 'Sayat-Nova', R. Pynsent (ed.), *The Everyman companion to East European Literature*, Dent: London, 1992, p. 320, and his *Literature of Georgia*, Oxford, 1994, p. 122.

against him. But the Georgian Catholicos Anton himself had survived accusations of Catholic sympathies, and any animosity on his part, otherwise reasonably suspected, could not have been so founded.

Whatever the truth might be with respect to a connection between his sister Ana and Sayat'-Nova, something moved Irakli by 1759 to dismiss Sayat'-Nova from his court, and the poet's creations of 1758 and 1759 show a soul in torment. The final breach between the King and Sayat'-Nova is referred to, with no details as to its cause, by the poet's son Ioane in his preamble to his transcription of the Georgian poem *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice':¹⁰⁴

ese gakhseneba saiat'novas roma t'avisi umotsqale mat'i umaghlisiba qovlad sak'art'velos da skhvaat'a da sxvat'a metad khsenebulma mep'e t'avisi ughirsi mona satz'odavi saiat'novas gastsqromia da garet' gaugdiat' imazed maukhsenebia (for gaukhsenebia) iap'i igavi ar gakhlavs.

'In this Sayat'-Nova recalls that his unmerciful (lord), His Highness the well remembered King of All Georgia, etc., etc., became angry with his worthless slave, the wretched Sayat'-Nova, and threw him out. He has reminded him. It is no cheap allegory.'

The Georgian phrase *iap'i igavi* can mean only 'a cheap riddle or word-play', *igavi*, otherwise APT *tejnîs*, being a *genre* to which Sayat'-Nova was much attached,¹⁰⁵ as his son well knew: hence his rejection of any facile interpretation of his father's plea as something with no foundation in reality. An Armenian rendering of *iap'i igavi* could well be *êzhan arats*, in which *arats* is to be interpreted, as is normal, 'allegory, parable', virtually a synonym of *arak*. Strangely, Hasrat'yan misinterprets this Armenian rendering, which therefore cannot be his own, as meaning 'bought cheap', taking *arats* as the past participle passive of *arnel* (Cl. *arnul*) in its sense of 'take, buy' (cf. Tk. *almak*), i.e. *gnats*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ioane, fol. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *nu getsqinos, ch'emo kargo, sitqvashia igavi mak'vs* 'Do not be vexed, my dear, I have a riddle in my words', in *Baghi bulbulit' avsila* 'The garden is full of nightingales', I fol. 2, v. 5, B p. 13, v. 6. Ioane also uses *igavi* beside Grg. *magalit'i* and *t'ejnisi* to describe the nature of the Georgian poem *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs varsklavis sivkhe* (read with B 29, *skhivi*) 'How shall the rays of a star dry up an ocean', fol. 16A.

¹⁰⁶ H p. xxxii. One must beware of basing speculations concerning the character of the king or the poet on this mistake, as was done by myself, before a photocopy of Ioane's MS was available to me, in my article 'A swan-song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol. 2, 1988, p. 43, in which I wondered whether the phrase 'bought cheap' was said by Irakli or Sayat'-Nova: it was said by neither, and what was said, by Ioane, was something completely different.

Hasrat'yan adduces a parallel from the poet's Georgian poem *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi* in which Sayat'-Nova proudly tells the king

*nasqidi var shenis dzviris p'asit'a*¹⁰⁷

'I am something bought by you for a high price'

This it is what confirmed Hasrat'yan in his misinterpretation. The profusion of ambiguities in Sayat'-Nova's life and works forbids any censoriousness. But there are enough there already, without any need to compound them by *double-entendres* discernible in Armenian translations from Georgian.

¹⁰⁷ I fol. 9, v. 8; B p. 21, v. 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FINAL COMPLAINT

Whatever the actual cause of his downfall was, Sayat'-Nova took the blame entirely upon himself, upon his own 'cleverness', according to the famous Georgian lament, *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo, ra ik'en* 'O my unhappy head, what has happened to you (qu'est-ce que tu es devenu)?', which clearly relates to his exile from court, though internal evidence suggests that it, at least one of the versions, was written some years afterwards when the poet, who while still a married priest might have been hoping for some royal reprieve, became, much against his own inclination, a monk, in his sixties, therefore circa 1772. The poem is extant in two versions: that of I. Grishashvili of 1918, reproduced by Baramidze in his Appendix, therefore as his less favoured version, regularly of five stanzas, though one is composed of seven verses in place of the six otherwise chosen;¹ and that given by Khelashvili which purports to be the version heard by him during his visit to Haghpata in ca. 1790, reproduced by Baramidze as his preferred version, consisting irregularly of only four stanzas, three of them comprising six verses, and one comprising seven.² Khelashvili, as suggested in the preceding chapter, may not be the most trustworthy of witnesses, and the last poem of the poet lamenting his rejection by his royal patron is the kind of theme that might tempt a faker. Despite the poem's metrical irregularities and its uncertain tradition, however, there is no cogent reason to withdraw it from the Sayat'-Nova canon, and no scholar has hitherto suggested that one might. The poem is full of striking, often cryptic images, imbued with a mixture of resentment, wounded pride, complaint and self-reproach typical of much of Sayat'-Nova's serious odes. It thus has an air of authenticity. It is not, however, included in Ioane's 1823 manuscript

¹ I do not have access to Grishashvili's work, *Sayat' nova*, and do not know his manuscript source for the poem; B pp. 75-77 (in his *Dameteba* Appendix).

² The text is in Ioane Batonishvili's *Kalmasoba*, edd. K. Kekelidze and A. Baramidze, Tbilisi, 1936, p. 226, reproduced by Baramidze, *Sayat' nova (K'art'uli lek'sebi)*, Tbilisi, 1963, pp. 23-24 (with a note on the two versions, without discussion of their relative merits, p. 91).

(nor, of course, in the *Tetrak*, which does not contain any Georgian poems). One might explain Ioane's omission by the natural embarrassment of a son in the face of his late father's disgrace, particularly since this had been visited upon his father by the grandfather of the Georgian prince, T'eimurazi Batonishvili, at whose request he had composed his manuscript. Not that the poem displays any bitterness towards Irakli. The poet blames only his own acts, and his own obstinacy in pursuing them.

Attractive (one hopes not meretriciously) by its completeness and satirical bite, Grishashvili's version is here preferred. Collated with Khelashvili's version, it runs as follows³:

She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo, ra ik'en?
k'veqanashi sasatz'ilo sheik'en.
*sait'atz' gaik'etz', ak'it' tsaik'en*⁴.
bolo drosatz' bedovlat'i sheik'en.
romels davabralo, risagan aris?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris.

t'it'k'mis viqav k'veqanashi k'ebuli,
chik'asavit' ok'ros qut'shi debuli.
es ra momivida akhirebuli?
*gana ch'emi t'avi k'visagan aris?*⁵
romels davabralo, risagan aris?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris.

*Brinji viqav, k'eroba rad mindoda?*⁶
*mtredi viqav, mtsqeroba rad mindoda?*⁷
*ert'i mit'khar, beroba rad mindoda?*⁸
*vechvob, ubeduris dghisagan aris.*⁹
romels davabralo, risagan aris?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris.

³ Grishashvili's text, B pp. 76-77.

⁴ Reading *tsaik'en* 'return, go back' for Grishashvili and Khelashvili *tsaik'etz'* which means roughly the same but does not rhyme, probably affected by *gaik'etz'* of the first hemistich.

⁵ G(rishashvili); K(helashvili) *ratz' momikhda, ganusjelobit' ari*.

⁶ This is the final stanza in Khelashvili, preceded by that of his beginning *mep'et'agan* (see note 10).

⁷ G; K *k'ori viqav, dzeroba rad mindoda?*

⁸ G; K *eri viqav, mghvdeloba rad mindoda? / modi, mit'khar, beroba rad mindoda*, thus giving a stanza of seven verses (see notes 10 and 13 below).

⁹ Amended from G's irregular twelve-syllable verse *vechvob, ch'emis ubedur dghisagan aris*; K *vgoneb, ch'emis ubeduris dghisagan ari*, an irregular verse of thirteen syllables, which Baramidze, p. 24, regularises by omitting *ch'emis* 'my', a procedure which, together with the adoption of the genitive *ubeduris*, will regularise G, as amended above.

*Ager mighma urmebitz'a amart'es.*¹⁰
sap'ranget'is turp'a sazi gamart'es.
*alt'mishlugh'i*¹¹ *satarughod tsamart'es.*¹²
imit'om, rom ert'sa k'okhshi sdgekharo.
romels davabralo, risagan aris?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris.

*Sayat'-Nova sheinakhe shent'ana.*¹³
sajinibos daaqene tz'khent'ana.
veggar tsava khont'k'art'an, qeent'ana.
nak'ebia sup'rashia ch'vent'ana.
ch'emi chianuri khisagan aris.
romels davabralo, risagan aris?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan aris.

- A O my unhappy head,¹⁴ what has happened to you?!
 You have made yourself a laughing-stock in the eyes of the world!
 Go back to wherever you escaped from.
 At the end of the day your luck ran out.
 Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
 These things came from my own cleverness!
- B I came within an inch of being famous in this world,
 As it were glass¹⁵ placed in a golden casket.

¹⁰ G; this stanza is not in K (B pp. 23-24), which reads instead

Mep'et'agan mejlishs mitsodebuli,
t'avadebt'an pativtz'emit' svebuli,
alisp'eris kabit' gansvenebuli
akhla ama zhazhit' gashavebuli.
ese khvedri ch'emis modzghvrisgan ari.
romels davabralo, risagan ari?
es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan ari.

This, like K's version of st. 3 as above (see note 8), and G's final stanza (see note 13), consists of seven verses.

¹¹ Amended from G (B p. 77) *alt'mishughi*.

¹² Amended from G (B p. 77) *tsamart'ves*, grammatically wrong and non-rhyming.

¹³ This stanza, consisting of seven verses, is not in K, which has thus only four stanzas.

¹⁴ *t'av* 'head' is also used to denote the whole self.

¹⁵ Although glass is not necessarily something to be disdained (cf. Horace, *O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro* 'O fountain of Bandusia, brighter than glass', *Odes*, 3,13), certainly not in the Orient (cf. Persian *shishah-khânah* 'palace adorned with mirrors, a crystal palace', *shishah-jân* 'with a heart transparent as glass, pure-minded', S), and Persian glassware was highly prized, *chik'a* is probably here used as something inferior, as elsewhere by S.-N. (*chik'as ar edeba almasis p'asi / t'u gind ok'ros bechedshiatz' gaitsqos* 'Glass will not command the price of diamond, even if set in a golden ring', in *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs*, ed. Baramidze, p. 29). For 'precious glass, crystal', the poet uses *broli*, even repeating it when he could metrically have used *chik'a* (*brolis minas da brolis suras gagavs qelia* 'Your neck is like a crystal goblet and a crystal pitcher', in

Whatever obstinacy took possession of me?¹⁶
 Is my head, then, made of (solid) rock?¹⁷
 Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
 These things came from my own cleverness!

- C I was rice: why would I have wished to become barley?¹⁸
 I was a dove: why would I have wished to become a quail?¹⁹
 Tell me only this: why would I have wished to become a monk?²⁰
 A black day, I declare, is the cause of all this.²¹

Gikhdeba zari, ed. B p. 33). If he did not wish the word to be pejorative, he could conversely have used *brolisavit* here without changing the metre; but outside the question of cheapness or preciousness, the sharp consonants of *chik'a* aptly convey the fragility of glass, and wordly fame ('Glück und Glas, wie leicht bricht das!')

¹⁶ Lit. 'What is this *akhirebuli* (thing) which came upon me?' *akhirebuli* basically means 'obstinate' (upryamiñ, Ch'; 'eigensinnig, starrköpfig', Tschenkeli), but can mean 'strange' ('sonderbar, merkwürdig', Tsch; seltsam, Meckelein; *akhirebulia* 'èto ni na chto ne pokhozhe', 'this is like nothing on earth', Ch'). It seems the poet is giving a clue to a major cause of his troubles, i.e. his obstinacy, but it is possible he is referring to the strangeness of that which has overtaken him.

¹⁷ G; K 'What has taken me away? It was through lack of judgment!'

¹⁸ Rice is, of course, a more expensive commodity than common barley. In the context of (white?) doves against dark quails or kites, it is probably significant that it is finer and whiter (see notes 18 and 20).

¹⁹ G; K 'I was a hawk; why would I have wished to become a kite' (*dzera* 'Milan (*Milvus*; Tsch). The hawk (*k'ori*) is considered a noble bird used by princes and kings in falconry. The quail of G is only cheap poultry. The kite (*milvus*) is of little use to falconers ('malgré toutes ses dispositions pour le vol, le milan n'a jamais donné de bons résultats au point de vue fauconnerie', *Larousse du XXe siècle*, Paris, 1931), and has a bad reputation among birds of prey ('ce n'est jamais en face que le milan attaque sa proie; cruel et sanguinaire, il représente le tigre dans le monde des oiseaux', *ibid.*). As the *tz'in* or *urur* it is feared in Armenia as a thief of chicks (see J.A. Greppin, *Classical and Middle Armenian Bird Names*, pp. 52-6), as in Georgia, where children play a game called *dzerabuoba* 'kite game, in which the boy playing the kite tries to catch the boys playing the chicks, which are defended by a boy playing the hen' (Tschenkeli). The two species known in the Caucasus, the *milvus migrans* or Black Kite and the *milvus milvus* or Red Kite, are both dark-coloured, swift-gliding and swooping birds with longish forked tails. In an unflattering, unclerical image, Sayat'-Nova is no doubt referring to the black species as a caricature of the Armenian priest or monk in his long sweeping black cassock; the kite is famed, as well as a raptor of chicks, for snatching food from the table, so that the image would seem more to belong to the French 18th century presented by Voltaire than to a contemporary Armenian monk: but none would think Sayat'-Nova a typical representative of these.

²⁰ K has two verses (making a stanza of seven verses) expanding this idea: 'I was a layman (*eri* 'folk, people, nation, army', Tschenkeli; cf. Arm. *zawrawor* 'soldier' used in canons, e.g. those of Dawit' of Gandzak, to denote a layman), why would I have wished to become a divine (*mghvdeli*)? Come, tell me why would I have wished to become a monk (*beri*)?'

²¹ G lit. 'I declare this is from my black day'; K 'I think this is from my black day; *shavi dghe* 'black day' (Unglückstag, Meckelein) is an astrological notion; that the poet was familiar with such non-orthodox (cf. St. Paul, 'Ye observe days and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain',

Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
These things come from my own cleverness!

- D See, they have got the ox-carts ready yonder.²²
They have turned up a beautiful instrument of Europe.²³
They have promoted a sixty-year-old to a higher rank,²⁴

Galatians, 4,10-11) but otherwise common beliefs, is clear from the manuscript he copied in 1765 (Matenadaran no. 4270), which contains a work on the Zodiac. The Greeks and Romans, and medieval and later Christians, knew many *dies albi* and *dies atri*. The calendar prefixed to Grafton's *Manuel* of 1565 lists 60 unlucky or very unlucky days, and these and others are given in John Brand and H. Ellis's informative chapter on 'Days lucky or unlucky' in *Observations on the popular antiquities of Great Britain*, Bohn's Antiquarian Library, London, 1854, vol. II, pp. 45-51 (though unfortunate for one historical personage, the Ides of March does not figure among them, though 16th March does). It is unlikely, however, that Sayat'-Nova was thinking of any particular date in the calendar, rather than a day that happened to be bad for him, as the English talk of a 'rainy day' (cf. the Arab proverb, 'Keep your white [silver] money for your black day' (Sa'îd 'Abbûd Ashqar, tr. M. Thilo, *Fünftausend Sprichwörter aus Palästina*, Berlin, 1937, no. 1885).

²² G. This stanza is not in K, which has in its place one that translates as

By kings called to the assembly,
Together with princes in honour made free,
With scarlet robe adorned,
But now with mourning weeds turned black —
This fate is from my confessor (*modzghvari*) —
Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
These things come from my own cleverness!

The discrepancies between these two versions will be discussed below. The ox-carts (*uremi* 'two-wheeled cart drawn by oxen or buffalo', Tschenkeli) have been prepared for the poet's removal.

²³ *saz* in Persian, the sense in which Sayat'-Nova regularly uses it, refers to any musical instrument, not specifically to the long-necked lute which it means in Turkish. Since Europe is not known for the fabrication of Oriental instruments, it doubtless refers here to the violin: it is thus not only by its beauty that it is contrasted below with Sayat'-Nova's own instrument, which the poet deprecatingly calls a wooden fiddle (*chianuri*). Violin-making was at its height in Cremona at this time, and the violin could even have been, though it is unlikely, by Stradivarius (1644-1737). The implication appears to be that the poet has been supplanted by a player of the violin, which reflects a change in the musical taste of the Georgian court, looking more and more to Russian, European epigones. There is an element of prophecy in this, since by the present time the European violin, the king of instruments, has largely replaced the *kamancha* in Arabian, Persian and Turkish folk ensembles. Sayat'-Nova here recalls the fate of the Old English minstrel Deor (9th century?), and his poignant complaint: 'With regard to myself I will tell / that for a long time I was minstrel (*scop*) of the Heodenings / and dear to my prince. My name was Deor. / For many years I had a good office (*folgað tilne*) / and a gracious lord, till now Heorrenda, / a man skilled in song, has received the estate / which the ruler of men once gave to me.' Doubtless the pious Sayat'-Nova would have concluded with Deor, that 'That passed over, so can this (*bæs ofereode, pisses swa mæg*)' (*The song of Deor*, ed. and tr. W.S. Mackie, *The Exeter Book*, part II, xviii, vv. 35-42, Oxford, (1934), 1958, p. 85.

²⁴ Hasrat'yan, while amending *alt'mishughi* correctly to *alt'mishlughi*, interprets this to mean 'pertaining to sixty, as a sixty para piece or a man sixty years old' (Glossary,

Because 'thou watchest over him [?]²⁵ in a single cell'.
Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
These things come from my own cleverness!

E Look after Sayat'-Nova at your place.²⁶
Put him in the stable with the horse(s).²⁷
He will no longer²⁸ go forth with Sultan, with Khan.
He [the Khan, a courtier?] sits at the table with us.
My fiddle is made of (nothing but) wood.²⁹
Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
These things come from my own cleverness!

It is clear from the serious discrepancies between the versions of Grishashvili on the one hand and Khelashvili on the other that it is impossible to establish a single 'original' text for this important ode. If

p. 277). It is only the latter meaning that is relevant here, and it must refer to the poet himself: if he were born in 1712, this would date the verse at 1772, an acceptable date for his entry into the monastery. *satarugho* is defined by Meckelein only as 'Stadtthauptman' (village headman, *muhtar*), but the root, APT *tarîq* means 'road, means, hierarchy, a line of service and promotion' (Redhouse), and Azeri *tărăqqî* 'progress, flourishing, push' (progress, *protsvetanie*, *sdvig*, *Äzizbây*) points clearly to its significance here, as referring to Sayat'-Nova's advancement (for he must be the sexagenarian in the verse) in the Church hierarchy, possibly as *vardapet* as distinct from the rank of *k'ahanay* 'parish priest' that he held thitherto, or at least *vanakan* or 'monk', superior, as 'black' clergy from whose ranks bishops might be elected, to the 'white', to use Russian Orthodox terms. See above, p. 23 n. 75.

²⁵ *sdgekharo* does not rhyme. The -o denotes a quotation; the -s- seems otiose, unless it is an accusative 3rd person pronominal prefix (direct object) in place of the genitive *u-* of *u-dga-khar* 'thou watchest over him' (Tsch., p. 292). Hasrat'yan links the verse, which he paraphrases, to the refrain: 'For that this cell has today become my house, Whom may I blame ...?'

²⁶ This stanza is not in K.

²⁷ It is possible to interpret the verbs as aorist indicatives rather than imperatives: 'You have looked after ... You have put him ...', though that is an unlikely reproach, a request to Irakli, the 'Sultan' of the poem, being more probable.

²⁸ There is almost certainly a hidden pun here. Reading *veggar* (Georgian 'no longer') as Arm. *veggar* (Cl. *vetar*), though one must note the absence of a Georgian case ending), this verse and the following could be read, 'A cowl comes with the Sultan, with a Khan. It is (highly) praised. It sits on the table before us.' This would echo the poet's reluctance expressed in other verses.

²⁹ The implication is that his instrument is a plain affair, not one inlaid with ivory, mother-of-pearl, and precious metals, in contrast perhaps to the European instrument of st. 4 (see note 22), which he does not appear to value, and certainly to his *k'amanch'a* as described in his ode, dated 1759, the last year of his career as royal minstrel, *Amen sazi mech'en govats, dun t'amam tasn is, k'amanch'a* 'Praised among all instruments, thou art perfection (*lit.* a perfect ten), O *k'amanch'a*', with its silver pegs, bejewelled head, ivory neck, mother-of-pearl body, and golden bow. That splendid instrument, however, if it did exist, must have belonged to the court: Sayat'-Nova must now content himself with one more modest. See below, Chapter Seven, p. 253.

all the material in it is by Sayat'-Nova, and not due in part to imaginative editors, imitators, or posticheurs — and, as we have said above, there is an air of authenticity about it all — then one can conclude only that some of the poem is due to a revision or revisions on the part of Sayat'-Nova, at various times, and in different circumstances: Both extant versions show signs of disturbance on the part of the exiled poet, in particular the irregular stanzas of seven verses instead of the expected six, and, if it is a genuine reading, the form *sdghekharo* of Grishashvili's stanza 4, verse 4, the former irregularity displaying a remarkable indifference on the part of one who surely learned to lisp in numbers, the latter an indifference to rhyme. One can easily find derivatives from *mart'va* that would rhyme (e.g. *momart'es* 'they set up, administered, led', M), but so could Sayat'-Nova; the glaring irregularity may have been left for special effect. One gains the impression that the poet had things to say that seemed more important than questions of metre and rhyme. Certainly, after what had happened to him, he had plenty to comment upon.

The evidence of the third stanza in both versions, despite their divergences, which are comparatively minor, mainly lexical, suggests that the poem was composed after Sayat'-Nova had already become a monk, since both refer to him as a *beri*, which means something more than a member of the clergy, e.g. *mghevdeli*, which also so describes him in Khelashvili's version's extra verse. One cannot, however, be too categorical, since *beri* basically means, and is also so attested, as 'old man' (particularly in the compound *berikatz'i* 'old man', Tsch), and was used in an antiquated expression *eri da beri* to contrast laymen (*eri*, a term also used in Khelashvili's extra verse) with *beri*, here 'clergy'. The ambiguity of these verses means that one cannot date a 'first version' as one composed immediately upon the poet's dismissal in 1759, when he became a *k'ahanay* or married parish priest, firstly at Anzal.

The two versions each comprise a whole stanza that is not found in the other, Grishashvili's fourth, and Khelashvili's third. That of Khelashvili is presented as having been recited in the young deacon's presence by Sayat'-Nova himself, and whether this took place in 1790 or later,³⁰ the poet had been a monk already for a number of years. Khelashvili's version is the less informative, indeed less bitter, though it does state that he owes his present humble position to his confessor

³⁰ See above, p. 40-41.

(*modzghvari*). Its tone is one to which one is well accustomed in the poems of Sayat'-Nova, one of nostalgic lament and resignation. Perhaps it is what one might expect from a believer who had had many years to reflect upon his fate, though the regrets were not all dead. Grishashvili's version is less philosophical, reflects more immediate distress, and dwells upon details of the poet's removal. His belongings, including no doubt his old wooden fiddle, are loaded onto ox-carts. According to one way of interpreting the final stanza, his unwanted cowl has been delivered by a khan or prince on behalf of the Sultan or King, and now lies before him, either on an altar, if by *sup'ra* Armenian *seghan* 'table, altar' is meant, or possibly on a laid table (T *sofra* 'gedeckter Tisch, mit Speisen besetztes Tablett', Steuerwald) at a farewell meal arranged for him after the convivial Georgian fashion. Wherever he was going, he was a reluctant traveller. His apparent plea to Irakli to be kept at his place, the Georgian court, if only in a stable (one hardly thinks that the relevant verses refer to a time when he was actually kept in a stable), would appear to point to the time of his exile in 1759. But verse 3 of Grishashvili's stanza 4 — perhaps temerarily, one here assumes that all the stanzas in both versions are genuine — refers to a sixty-year-old who has been promoted to a higher rank. This can hardly be other than Sayat'-Nova himself, since it must be he that is to dwell in the one hut specified in the following verse 5. It is not clear what the poet's use of *k'okhi* implies, since it is defined as a building term in the dictionaries only in the sense of 'hut' ('Hütte', Tschenkeli, Meckelein; 'talavari, roofed in reeds or straw, izba', Niko and Davit' Ch'ubinashvili), an unlikely dwelling-place within a monastery, and none can be seen in depictions of that of Haghpāt. The usual term for 'cell' is that used by Khelashvili to denote the poet's habitation on the occasion of his visit to Haghpāt, viz. *senaki* (Arm. *seneak*), or *sakani*. But Sayat'-Nova is an Armenian, and the normal word for a monastery cell is *khutz'*, which is, however, also defined by NBHL as *khugh*, which can denote a hut or cabin (Gk. *καλύβη*, NBHL). As with the universe, so with Sayat'-Nova: on such small matters do great things turn. If the term does refer to a free-standing building, then the verses may not relate to his entry into the monastery but, by virtue of the higher rank to which he has been promoted, presumably, after the death of his wife in 1768, from that of *k'ahanay* or 'married parish priest', to that of *vardapet*, to a transfer to single quarters, which he looks upon less as an honour, than a sentence to solitary confinement. It is the use of 'sixty-year-old' with reference to

himself that allows one approximately to date the promotion to which he refers, for if he were born in 1712, a reasonable date for his birth, as we have seen in a previous chapter, then his 60th year would date from 1772, a likewise reasonable date for his becoming a monk.

There is no escape from chronological problems in the biography of Sayat'-Nova. More important, however, is the poet's attitude to the unwanted fate that has overtaken him. He takes all the blame upon himself for whatever has removed him from his exalted position at court to his present humble condition:

Whom may I blame? From what did it all come?
These things come from my own cleverness

is the refrain repeated at the close of every stanza. In what this cleverness consisted is unspecified, and much depends on the interpretation of *chkua*. Its usual meanings are all positive ('intelligence, reason, cleverness', 'Verstand, Vernunft, Klugheit', Tschenkeli), and its impairment in any way denotes stupidity, as e.g. in *chkuamsbuk'i* "with light intelligence", i.e. 'stupid' ('etwas dumm', Tschenkeli). But here it is clearly used by Sayat'-Nova ironically, rather in the sense of 'being too clever by half'. In what particular way we are left to conjecture for ourselves, but we can at least discount as possible reasons for the poet's disgrace dishonourable crimes and misdemeanours such as dishonesty, theft, corruption of youth, etc., none of which could possibly qualify, even ironically, as 'clever', and any of which would have meant that the option, unwelcome as it was, of taking holy orders would not have been open to him. He could certainly never have recorded, as in the same poem, that he was sent the Armenian priest's head-dress or cowl (*veggar*, alias *knkugh*) by the Sultan (Irakli II) through the agency of one of his princes (*veggar tsava khont'k'art'an, qeent'ana*).³¹ As a ground for his dismissal from court an involvement in nationalist or ecclesiastical politics has been mooted, e.g. by Hasrat'yan,³² a hypothesis — it is no more — that will be discussed below. Perhaps, as suggested above, musical taste at the more and more Europe-orientated court had changed, and the violin was preferred to the kemenje. Maybe the court had just found a better man, an equivalent of Deor's Heorrenda,³³ though perhaps then there would be no reason for Sayat'-Nova to impute his downfall to his own

³¹ St. 5, v. 3.

³² Pp. xvi, xxvi-xxvii.

³³ See above, n. 23.

cleverness. A fruitful source of a reason for his dismissal, however, could lie in the circumstances of his position as an Armenian minstrel in the Georgian court.

The practical and the intellectual, the temporal and the spiritual, the man of action and the poet are at best uneasy bedfellows. At most civilised courts, however, they are forced to coexist. It would not be fair to compare Tiflis with Athens or Versailles. Perhaps, in view of Georgia's pride as a nation of warriors, Prussia or Sparta would be better parallels. The principal ornament of the former, Frederick II, intent upon building up his army and extending his empire by feat of arms, was at the same time an avid seeker of knowledge and culture, though the mixture of autocracy and philosophy was one that Voltaire was glad to be able eventually to escape. He had his limitations and contradictions. Though failing to understand why he should do anything to help Johann Sebastian Bach, he was reputed to be a skilled performer on the flute. This at least places him in a different category from that of Ateas, ruler of the Scythians, who declared, upon hearing Ismenias, 'best of flautists' play to the delight of his courtiers, that he preferred the neighing of horses.³⁴ Or of Gelon of Scythia, who unable to play the lyre like his guests at a party, called for his horse to be brought in the room, and leapt nimbly upon its back,³⁵ to demonstrate no doubt what he felt to be a superior skill. For Demaratus of Sparta music was simply tomfoolery (*phlyarein*),³⁶ while for Archidamus II it ranked no higher than soup-making.³⁷ Yet for all that it was a native of Sparta, Terpander, whom tradition credits with having first organised music.³⁸ And the musicians of antiquity were not on occasions slow to remind their social superiors that they knew their business best. When Philip of Macedon, best known as a battle-scarred warrior, ventured to criticise a harp-player at a banquet, reminding us nowadays of Stalin telling Shostakovich what he should do, he received the dusty answer, 'God forbid that you should ever fall so low as to know better about such matters than I!'³⁹ This

³⁴ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 175F, 334B, 1095F; ed. and tr. F.C. Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library, *Moralia*, vol. III, pp. 24-27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 175B; Babbitt, *ibid.*, pp. 26-29.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 220B; Babbitt, *ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 218CD; Babbitt, *ibid.*, pp. 306-307.

³⁸ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica*, *Moralia*, 1134B; ed. and tr. B. Einarson and P.H. De Lacy, Loeb Classical Library, *Moralia*, vol. XIV, pp. 370-371.

³⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 179B; Babbitt, LCL, *Moralia*, vol. III, pp. 52-58. Aulus Gellius also comments upon Philip's complex character.

ever-present cultural antithesis among the frequenters of ancient courts, the practical men on one side, the musicians on the other, was surely characteristic of the court of Irakli II. The king himself, though he is not known to have been blessed by the Muses as a poet or instrumentalist, reminds one, as a warrior king who at the same time was a sponsor of the arts, not alone of Frederick II of Prussia, who was not loath to compare him to himself, but of such medieval rulers such Bertran II, Count of Foucalquier, whose dual interests are vividly illustrated by a seal of 1168, which depicts him on one side as a mounted knight armed with long sword and shield, and on the other seated on a cushion bowing a fiddle.⁴⁰ Or, since it is a question of the king's character that concerns us rather than the extent of his domains, of Philip of Macedon himself, of whom Aulus Gellius reports: 'This Philip, although almost constantly busied and distracted by the labours and triumphs of war, yet never was a stranger to the Muse of the liberal arts and the pursuit of culture, but his acts and words never lacked charm and refinement. In fact collections of his letters are in circulation, which abound in elegance and grace, and wisdom, as for example, the one in which he announced to the philosopher Aristotle the birth of his son Alexander'.⁴¹

By contrast, however, many of the nobles with whom Sayat'-Nova came into contact at court, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, were of a coarser cut.

⁴⁰ Reproduced, in a most informative context, by Christopher Page, *Voices and instruments of the Middle Ages*, Dent: London, 1987, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Attic Nights*, IX.iii.2-3, ed. and tr. J.C. Rolfe, *LCL*, vol. II, pp. 158-161.

CHAPTER FIVE

SWAN-SONGS

Poets in a materialistic society — and where is or ever was one that is or was not? — are not universally overwhelmed by praise in their lifetime. Matthew Arnold, observing the English scene, which Ruskin had already concluded was driven mainly by greed, analysed the aristocracy as barbarous, the middle class as Philistine, and the working class as mere populace, which presumably means proletarian. Since we do not in England have a recognisable Brahmin caste, this does not leave much of society over to provide connoisseurs of art and music (which suggests that these do not follow class lines, but form a narrow swath through them all, to form perhaps the Abbé Dubos' all-important *peuple*, the ultimate arbiter of good art, to whom we shall return below). Poets, it must be said, without necessarily being of the same ilk as Villon or Byron, are often not the easiest of ones fellow men to get on with. Thus, even without proof of the contrary — and there is, in fact, plenty of it — one would not *a priori* expect the life of an Armenian minstrel employed by an 18th-century Georgian court to run particularly smoothly. Sayat'-Nova was after all, as Georgians would see it, a member of a different race and sect, and relations between the two peoples have not always been of the most amical. There is, moreover, no evidence at all that Sayat'-Nova was blessed with a high degree of tact. His claim to fame, repeated in one poem after another, in plain Georgian, too, to the ear of the King would not have enamoured him to other members of the royal court. Provoked or not, he was not unaware of his own worth, nor of the lack of it in the like of the *nak'az mart'n* or 'worthless fellow' who showed no appreciation of his beloved K'amancha.¹ As for the lesser lights who had as much chance of eclipsing him as had stars of drying up the ocean, his voice, splitting the heavens like a clap of thunder, would show them who was who:

*sitqvas vitqvi, tz'am k'ukhili daitsqos.*²

¹ *Amen sazi mechēn govats*, t. 1, v. 2, T p. 134, I fol. 70A, H p. 5.

² *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs varskvlavis skhivi*, final verse, I fol. 16A, B p. 30.

Whether some courtly wag had made a pun on his assumed name with APT *nauwâs* 'waving, agitated, pendulous' (Steingass), 'anything that hangs pendulously and dangles, a tassel' (Redhouse), or whether he thought of it for himself (it was, after all, having been the nickname of the great 8th-century poet Ḥasan b. Hâni³, and that of a pre-Islamic king of Yemen, not disgraceful), Sayat^c-Nova was intent to show that he was no man of straw, to be blown away by the wind:

Is ên Sayat^c-Novasên ch'im, vur avzi vra him(n)anam³

'I am not that (sort of) Sayat^c-Novas, that I should be founded on sand.'

But that has a special poignancy, being dated in 1758, shortly before his downfall.

Sayat^c-Nova was not the only poet determined to fall no prey to false modesty.

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius
regalique situ pyramidum altius...
non omnis moriar multaque pars mei
vitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera
crescam laude recens...*

... ex humili potens...

(*Odes*, iii.30)

'I have built a monument more lasting than bronze
And higher than the Pyramids' royal pile...
I shall not altogether die, and a great part of me
Shall escape the Goddess of Death: on I shall grow,
Ever fresh in posterity's acclaim...

... risen high from humble origins ...'

boasts the normally modest Horace, in words that Sayat^c-Nova, likewise, for a time at least, *ex humili potens*, could have echoed, and which were echoed, not unawares no doubt, by modern Europe's greatest:

*And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent*

(*Sonnet* 107)

Sayat^c-Nova's awareness of his own merits was not, however, based solely upon the excellence of his verse. He had claims of a mystic nature:

³ *T'amam ashkhar pētut eka*, st. 5, v. 1, T p. 124, H p. 51, I (st. 4, v. 1), fol. 66. Dated in T as 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758).

*Amen mart' ch'i kana khěmi, im jurěn urish jěrên ê.
Amen mart' ch'i kana kart'a, im girěn urish gěrên ê.⁴*

'Not every man can drink of my water, my water is from a different spring
(*lit.* from a different water).

Not every man can read (my writings), my writing is from a different book
(*or* from a different writing)'

— in which, as the attempt to put the thought into English shows, the ambiguities of *jur* and *gir* are typical of Sayat'-Nova.

This claim could not but remind his fellow Christians of Christ's retort to Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world' (*John*, 18,36). A similar claim to a higher authority was made by the 14th-century Persian *Hâfiz*:

nadâdam khôshtar az sha'r-i tû, Hâfiz, ba-Qur'ânî ki andar sîna^h dârî⁵

'I never saw poetry fairer than yours, *Hâfiz*, by the Qur'an that you hold in your bosom!'

— it being, of course, the *métier* of a *hâfiz* to know the Qur'an by heart, as it was the duty of a Christian to keep Christ's words (*John*, 14,23).

Although on a more secular level, the 12th-century troubadour Bernard de Ventadorn likewise found an exalted explanation of his own excellence that did no damage to his ego:

*non es meraveilha s'ieu chan
mielhs de nulh autre chantador,
que plus mî tra.l cors ves amor⁶
e mielhs sui faitz a son coman*

'It is no wonder that I sing
Better than any other singer,
Since my heart draws me more than any other to Love,
And I am better made (to fulfil) his commandments.'

There are many striking parallels between the careers of Sayat'-Nova and Bernard, who was of humble origin (*de paubra generacion*), being the son of a stoker in the bakery of the Château de Ventadour, and by virtue of his acquired skill in the art of *ben chantar e trobar* enjoyed the patronage of the Viscomte de Ventadour. Whatever the truth may be

⁴ In his 1953 complaint to the King, *Dun ên gěłkhên imastun is*, st. 4, vv. 1-2, H p. 20, I fol. 64.

⁵ Ed. A.J. Arberry, *Hâfiz — fifty poems*, Cambridge, 1953, no. 42, p. 74.

⁶ *Cit.* L.T. Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 70.

concerning Sayat^e-Nova and the Princess Ana, Bernard's relationship with the Viscomte's young wife, to whom he addressed many love-songs lauding her great worth (*la valor de leis*; cf. perhaps Sayat^e-Nova's *Is k'u ghimat'en ch'im gidi* 'I cannot tell your worth', *Tetrak*, p. 108), is represented by his editor and biographer Uc de Saint-Circ, who claims the Viscomte Ebles de Ventadorn, the son of Bernard's noble mistress, as his source, as far from innocent. Learning at long last of the affair, the Viscomte withdrew his patronage (*s'estranget de lui*), and his wife, who from her place of seclusion conveys her wish (like Sayat^e-Nova's putative Princess Ana, perhaps) to end the relationship, and Bernard is requested to leave the territory. He then makes his way to Normandy, where he is said to be well received by Eleanor d'Acquitaine, represented as the Duchess of Normandy, though she could not have held that title at the time. For her, a lady who knows how to appreciate merit, honour, and fair words of praise (*s'entendia en pretz et en honor et en bendig de lausor*), he composes many songs, and conceives a passion for her that is reciprocated. The affair lasts until Henry II takes her across the Channel to be Queen of England. Hereafter Bernard attaches himself to the Comte de Toulouse, and upon his patron's death in 1194 becomes a monk in the abbey of Dalon in his native province of Limousin, where he dies — which again recalls Sayat^e-Nova, who was to spend his last years as a monk near his native or childhood village of Sanahin. Believers in Reincarnation are free to research further. There are certainly elements in the account of Uc and his continuator that smack of literary convention. When one considers the fate of Bernard's near contemporary Abélard, what was to be the fate of Ann Boleyn's musician Smeaton, and that of Thomas Becket as a result of Henry II's impatience, the nobles in this story display a degree of complacency that is remarkable: it is difficult, nonetheless, not to think of Irakl II's forbearance, if in fact the honour of his sister had been seriously impugned. In terms not irrelevant for students of Sayat^e-Nova, French scholars tend to dismiss Uc's life of Bernard as 'le roman d'un jeune homme pauvre', cobbled out of the troubadour's own songs, 'arbitrairement interprétées, complétées, et localisées'.⁷ The dangers of such a procedure are compounded by the fact that the events adumbrated by the songs themselves may have as much to do with the realities of the lives of these poets of

⁷ Uc's account is taken from the text published by J. Boutière and A.H. Schulz, *Biographie des troubadours*, 2nd edition, Paris, 1973, pp. 20-21. A. Jeanroy's evaluation, quoted above, of Uc's reliability, is cited *ibid.*, p. 25, n. 1.

the age of chivalry as the love of their 16th century pastiche Don Quixote for Dulcinea. One must be on ones guard in seeking to establish the facts behind Sayat'-Nova's verse. He is, after all, an *ashugh*, an *'âshiq*, and it is a terminological obligation on the part of such a one to play the lover. Poets, unless, perhaps, before the Bar, cannot be assumed to be telling the truth. There is something in rhyme and metre already that tends to refract the straight beam of Truth's pure light. But though the Bard himself admits, 'Most true it is that I have look'd on truth / Askance and strangely' (*Sonnet* 110), there is clearly much sense in Wordsworth's view of the Sonnets, that 'with this key / Shakespeare unlocked his heart.' There is much that is imaginary and conventional in the poems of Armenia's greatest poet of the modern era, but a poet whose work is merely that will not be taken seriously for long. 'I hate all things purely fictional', said the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*, and if imagery and metaphor are the wings of poetry, sincerity is its life blood. In the early chapters we have tried to present what few documentary facts there are concerning Sayat'-Nova's life. We have now nothing but the evidence of his own verse. Luckily, the sentiments expressed there, however exaggerated they at times may appear to men from colder climes, are palpably heartfelt. Scholars must beware of indulging in too much scepticism, particularly when it is grounded on the fact that the events in the lives of the troubadours are most unlikely to happen to them.

It is not only methods foul and fair that Love has in common with War: both are dangerous games. The *lausengier* or slanderer — so-called, at least, since it would be naive to think all their denunciations devoid of truth — was the bane of romantic poets everywhere. The more stout-hearted of the troubadours rejoiced in condemning the calumniator; like the 12th-century Provençal troubadour Arnaut Daniel, Dante's *miglior fabbro del parlar materno*,⁸ Petrarch's *gran maestro d'Amor*:⁹

*Lo ferm voler q'el cor m'intra
no.m pot les becs escoissendre ni ongla
de lausengier, qui pert per mal dir s'arma;
e car non l'aus batr' ab ram ni ab verga,
sivals a frau, ali on non aurai oncle,
iauzirai ioi, en vergier o dinz cambra.*¹⁰

⁸ *Purgatorio*, 26, 115-23.

⁹ *Trionfo d'Amore*, 4, 41.

¹⁰ *Cit. L.T. Topsfield, op. cit.*, pp. 196-197, 213-214. See Addenda, p. 453.

'The firm desire that enters my heart
 Cannot be torn from me by the beak or nail
 Of the slanderer, who loses his soul by evil speaking.
 And since I dare not strike him with stick or rod,
 At least in secret there where I shall have no witness
 Shall I indulge in joy, in orchard or in chamber.

The backbiter is everywhere, at all times, West and East. Like Arnaut, the Arab Umar ibn Al-Farîd (1185-1235) rejoiced that he and his beloved could meet when no '*wâshi* "slanderer" was near to wrong us by his calumnies'.¹¹ The circumvention of the slanderer, though often no doubt a matter of some seriousness, is a feature of the *genre*. Some of the numerous picaresque escapades in which a minstrel could become involved are copiously illustrated in the 13th century German Manesse manuscript now in Heidelberg, which depicts Minnesänger disguising themselves as hawkers in order to pass their poetic messages to their noble mistresses, being hoisted by them in a basket up the castle wall, being admitted by a lady half-naked in bed, and fondling their mistress's legs and having their locks cut off for their temerity; one lover, Hartlob, rejected by his mistress but reluctant to let go of her, has his hand bitten by her pet dog. The course of love, true, false, or wholly fictitious, is not allowed to run smooth. The Arabic root وشى *w.sh.y.* used by Umar ibn Al-Farîd is ambiguous, meaning basically 'to colour, decorate, embroider', then, metaphorically, 'to embroider a tale', then 'to lie'. Modern Arabic makes a clear distinction between the nominal forms *washiy*^{un} 'bright coloration, patterns', and the agent noun/present participle *wâshi* 'a denunciator, slanderer' (Baranov). The words are borrowed by Persian and Turkish: *vashi* 'variegation in colours, a cloth of various colours, the graining on a sword-blade, specks of gold in an ore'; 'a variegation, an interlarding a narrative with falsehood, a bearing mischievous tales, a having a numerous family' (Redhouse); *vâshi* 'who ornaments with designs, a mint-coiner, a weaver', 'who interlards a narrative with lies, who carries tales, a tale-bearer', 'who has many children' (Redhouse); for Persian *vashî* Steingass adds specifically 'reporting to the king', as probably the best attested, and most dangerous, recipient of slanders. With the semantic development, one may compare French *couleurs*, used in the sense of 'fibs'. Sayat'-Nova uses the word(s) once in Georgian, which would not show the difference in the

¹¹ R.S. Briffault, *The troubadours*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1965, pp. 29, n. 18. See Addenda.

lengths of the vowels, as one of nine rhymes in *-ashi* in a Georgian poem in praise of the beloved:

ert' tsut'azed at'as p'erad gaitz'vili.
*vintz' rom gnakhams, naghveli khar, vashi khar.*¹²

This may be rendered as

'In one second you change colour a thousand times.
 (For) whomsoever looks at you, you are trouble, you are a changing-pattern.'

But both *naghveli* and *vashi* (the latter word not listed in the usual dictionaries, Ch'ik'obava etc.) are ambiguous, so that the verses could be read

'In one second you change colour a thousand times.
 (For) whomsoever looks at you, you are gall, a slandress.'

Such a sentiment, however, would be a most incongruous component of a eulogy, and it seems unlikely that Sayat'-Nova, here in danger of being hoist with his own petard, intended *washi* in its pejorative sense: a possible former dyer, he could be familiar with the word in its technical connotation.¹³

We have already seen what Irakli II thought of his nobles, at least according to Joseph Emin. The particular dangers of the Georgian court are implied in a work by a Georgian courtier whose dates overlap with those of Sayat'-Nova, and whose book may have been known to the poet, viz. *A book of wisdom and lies* by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658-1725). The author puts the following advice in the mouth of the vizier Leon:

'Sire, when a master loves his servant, he should not be ready to give ear to his detractors. There will always be men at the palace gates who fabricate all sorts of stories and visions, and plot and practise trickery to discredit him.'¹⁴

¹² *Shuaghamis varsklavivit'* 'You are like a midnight star', st. 4, vv. 4-5, B p. 50.

¹³ Hasrat'yan takes *vashi* as the equivalent of Arm. *vash* 'bravo!', translating the equivalent of 'You love silken cloths of variegated colour. / For whomsoever beholds you, you are Alack and Bravo (*Akh u Vash*), p. 109. 'Bravo!' in Georgian is *vasha*; and Sayat'-Nova does not, as commonly supposed, completely ignore final *-a*'s (see above, Chapter Three, p. 95, n. 53). APT *vashi*, as denoting at least variegation in colour, accords better with the meaning of the preceding verse. K. Lipskerov's Russian version meaning 'There is no help to be had in reaching (an understanding of) the vagaries of your thoughts. / For all who behold you, you are a bitter sigh, torrents of tears (*Smenu dum tvoikh postich' net podsporiya. / Vsem glyadyashchim — gorkii vzdokh, slyoz razlivii, ti*), Gaysaryan, p. 177, vividly illustrates the distortion inherent in rhymed translations, though in general Russian translators, with the rich rhyming potential of their language at their disposal, do better than this.

¹⁴ Tr. K. Vivian, *A book of Wisdom and Lies*, London, 1982, no. 12, p. 18. A more literal translation of the Georgian title would be 'A tale of the wisdom of fiction', as

The many enemies that figure in the works of the troubadours are not always literary coventions, hazards invented as foils to enhance the ingenuity of the poetic lover. Real enemies could easily be made, particularly by the sort of poet, and Sayat'-Nova was one, ready with wit and not slow to react to criticism. 'The most inventive and original of all the troubadours', as Topsfield calls him, the 12th-century Marcabru, if one account of his life can be believed, had enemies anything but imaginary: 'he was so critical, that in the end the lords of the castle of Guyenne, of whom he had spoken ill, killed him.'¹⁵

Sayat'-Nova's enemies were just as real, and if not quite so lethal, they must have made a contribution to his death as a poet, though, as his *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'Oh my unhappy head' poem has shown, he had mainly himself to blame. It cannot have been that he was too trusting, for we have seen that in 1753, six years before his exile, he feels impelled to beseech the king, in his clearly sincere *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is*, not to make his mind a gateway for the fool (*khilk'ët himarin bab mi ani*), and in terms that echo Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's advice, asks him not to believe the words of strangers, however pious they seem:¹⁶

*Du k'u sirtën istak pahê, iadi khoskën avtalu ch'ê.
Asttsu sêrën kanch'oghi pes dërnemet, jughab mi ani.*

'Keep your heart pure: a stranger's word is not to be believed,
Though he proclaim the love of God from your gate, do not answer.'

But he at least reckons with some form of punishment, though one feels that it could hardly be the capital sort he feigns to fear: if there were any real danger of that, if Irakli had been anything like Henry VIII, it would not have been wise to put such an idea into the King's head:

T'e êsantz' êl such' unenam, gëlukhës ara tal, t'ak'avur.

'If I have committed an offence, have me beheaded, O King!'

That he had been wise to right to fear exile ('Do not cause Sayat'-Nova's tomb to be an Indian, Abyssinian, or Arabian one'), events in 1759 were to show, even if he was allowed to remain in Georgia.

the title of E. Lundberg's translation, Moscow, 1948, 1951, *O mudrosti vimisla* (referred to by A.G. Baramidze, *Istoriya gruzinskoï literaturï, kratkiï ocherk*, Moscow, 1952, pp. 57-58).

¹⁵ L.H. Topsfield, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁶ See above, Chapter Three, p. 94 n. 51.

In another complaint to the King — and in no society on earth would this be conducive to great popularity among the nobility, and it is in Georgian — namely the undated *Samart'ali miqav, khelmtsip'e kharo* 'Do me justice, you are King', Sayat'-Nova shows that his enemies were not only at the palace gate, but in the *mejlis* itself. Here he suffers much obloquy and ridicule from those who seek to turn the King against him (*shegidzlian* 'they compel you, force your hand'). It may be that the insults were not deadly serious. Poets everywhere are subject to ridicule in some circles. The self-professed 'lover' must expect some banter, which is itself a literary commonplace. 'Many men say I have a beloved' (*Shat mart' kosê t'e yar unim*), complains Sayat'-Nova, adding a potentially embarrassingly ambiguous remark that his beloved is something else (*dun urish yar is, goveli*);¹⁷ again, 'Many men say I yearn for a beloved' (*Shat mart' kosê, is yarmen hasrat' im*).¹⁸ This is merely in the tradition of the German folksong *Horch' was kommt von draussen rein*:

*Leute haben's oft gesagt,
Dass ich ein fein's Liebchen hab'.
Lass sie reden, schweig' fein still.
Kann ja lieben, wen ich will.*

More seriously, one recalls the poem entitled *L'Albatros* by Charles Baudelaire:

*Le poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.*

As for aristocratic attitudes, one recalls that the Emperor Augustus had pleasure in calling his faithful subject Horace, in whose career we have found many points to compare with that of Sayat'-Nova, *sextario-lus* or 'Half-pint' on account of his rotund and diminutive stature. But even if the insults of which Sayat'-Nova complains are meant facetiously, they lack the subtlety of a Max Beerbohm or P.G. Wodehouse, showing Georgian court humour to be of the crudest kind. Sayat'-Nova complains of being called 'a stinking well' (*mqrali cha*), a 'useless heap' (*urgebeli mt'a*, lit. 'useless mountain'), which might suggest the poet was above average height, 'a dung-beetle' (*makhara*),¹⁹ etc. Appearing

¹⁷ T p. 106, H p. 17.

¹⁸ T p. 114, I fol. 58A, H p. 32.

¹⁹ Hasrat'yan declines to translate the *makhara* insult, reducing the quintain to four verses. St. 1, v. 3 contains the insult *macha*, otherwise unattested in Georgian, which may

before the King in a strange or foreign garb (*utz'khod mort'uli*), which must refer to his original Armenian costume, no doubt the simple dress not very unlike that of an Armenian peasant (*me glekhi var, mitsaze dasakhali* 'I am a peasant, living on the soil', st. 2, v. 2), he is sent back 'stiched up as in theirs' (*mat'asavit' damabrunes dart'uli*), presumably in the livery of the native Georgian court minstrels or something like it (cf. Greene's slander of Shakespeare as an 'upstart crow, beautified in our feathers'), whereupon they call him 'a roll of carpet' (*churchqiani khalit'a*, lit. 'a rolled-up rug') — a not unfunny gibe that may remind Belgians of the Brussels comedian Virgile's *Virgile à l'Eglise*, in which the priest is said to enter 'habillé en tchouk-tchouk', i.e. as a Moroccan carpet-seller. 'Would that I did not understand that sort of Georgian', he laments (*netamtz' ar shemetqo me is k'art'uli*). Without the protection of the king, his spiritual mother and father (*ch'emi sulieri dedmama*), they would break his ribs (*damimtvrion tsibogverdebi*). Yet it is before such people that he is called upon to perform new songs, before whom, Pagliaccio-like, he must lay bare his soul:

mejliś zma mounda akhal-akhali.
vis tsinat' gavt'are gulis khakhali?

'The assembly demands ever new word-play.
 Before whom shall I unravel the basket(-work) of my heart?'

And yet, as in *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, where he admits that he is the author of his own misfortune, so here he blames his own tongue:

enit'moimate sheni dardebi,
Saiat'novav, naghelist'vis mza kharo!

'Through (your own) tongue your cares have multiplied:
 Sayat'-Nova, you are ready for mortification!'

Ioane's annotation to his father's Georgian poem, most likely addressed to Irakli, 'Believe me, I ask, who am most to be believed',²⁰

be Turkish *maça* 'spade' (cards)', as in *maça beyi* 'knave of spades' (Hony), cf. the White American slang expression 'spade' for 'a Black American', and the British English expression 'black as the ace of spades', possibly here with reference, as with the 'dung-beetle' insult, to Sayat'-Nova's outdoor complexion or his simple dark costume again as a possible object of criticism. Muradyan, *op. cit.*, p. 81, suggests Persian *mâchah*, said to mean 'dog' (*shun*), but not attested in that form. Steingass lists *mâch* 'kiss, bitch, ball of paste in soup', but the -a of the Georgian form is not easily disposed of (*mach'a khar-o*).

²⁰ *Damijere, vambob, rom ujeravles*, B pp. 9-10; var; *amijero magakh-seno kargia ujeravles* 'Believe me, you have remembered me, it is good, most to be believed', I fol. 14A. Of the two versions, Ioane's is the more corrupt.

picturesquely refers to the poet's enemies. In the poem Sayat'-Nova, though self-searching as usual and aware of his privileged but precarious position ('However much they decorate a wooden dish in gold, men still call it a combustible vessel';²¹ 'What is overlaid with gold is still called glass'²²), nevertheless claims to be of good stock ('Some people say I am of good family'²³), boasts of his position ('I am the minstrel of the King of Georgia'²⁴), and daringly insists that he be spoken to, presumably by the King, in clear terms ('A word must be as though (written) on a clear thread. He is a devil, who functions in (a cloud of) smoke'²⁵). His son, possibly elaborating the image of the willow, itself a common tree known for its pliancy, which calls the poet firewood,²⁶ refers to his father's tens of thousands of unnamed bitter enemies, with gall in their hearts, who, though their father is a knob of garlic and their mother an onion, consider themselves to be pineapples.²⁷ With respect to this vivid image, in the very year 1823, when Ioane compiled his manuscript, the pineapple was singled out by Russia's most famous poet as a rare and exotic fruit, for in composing Chapter One of his *Eugene Onegin* in Kishinev and Odessa in that year, Pushkin portrays the epony-

²¹ *Khis t'ep'shi ra gind zarnishit' moatsqon | maintz' dasatsvavsa pinas itqvian*, st. 1, vv. 3-4, B p. 9.

²² St. 3, v. 4, *Ok'rot' miqenili minas itqvian*, B p. 10.

²³ St. 4, v. 1 *zogi katz'i itqvis — kai gvari var*, B p. 10.

²⁴ St. 4, vv. 3-4, *Sak'art'velos mep'is sazandari var | Sayat'-novas — arut'inas itqvian*, B p. 10.

²⁵ *Sitqva unda ert'nairi zolzeda | eshmakia vintz' ahqveba bolzeda*, st. 2, vv. 1-3, B p. 9.

²⁶ *mashin kho tirip'itz' itqvis, kvari var*, st. 4, v. 2, B p. 10 'then even the willow says, I am firewood'; I fol. 14A *t'u daujero, tirip'itz...* 'if you believe it, the willow too says...' It is possible to interpret this and the preceding verse (n. 23) otherwise: 'Some (common) people say, "I am of good family" (i.e. they themselves are). Even the willow (common and useless though it is?) says, "I am (excellent as) firewood".' But to boast of being firewood does not betoken overweening pride. The following verses stress that the poet at least knows who he is: 'I am the minstrel of the King of Georgia. They call me Sayat'-Nova, Arut'in' (*Sak'art'velos mep'is sazandari var, | Sayat'-novas Arut'inas itqvian*).

²⁷ *Ese qap'ia lek'si imazed u(t')k'vams roma arian innairi katz'ni roma mama niori qop'ili da deda khakhvi. t'it'on t'avisi t'avist'vis ananasi daurk'mevia. isetz' asre mo{k'} khsendes. gulshi naghveli bevria, magram enas ver moukhsenebia*, I fol. 14A, 'This qâfiya poem speaks of those who are such men who, their father being garlic and their mother onion, pride themselves as pineapples, at all events are so remembered here. There are tens of thousands of such with gall in their heart, but they are not mentioned by name'. This is cited from MS 222, but without exact reference and inaccurately, by Giorgi Leonidze, *Mgosani Saat'nova, biograp'iuli eskizi*, T'bilisi, 1930, pp. 22-23 (I am indebted to Sir Harold Bailey for providing me with a photocopy of this, in England, rare publication from his library). The annotation is partially quoted in Russian translation by Gaysaryan, p. 30.

mous hero dining in a St. Peterburg restaurant on expensive dishes including 'the golden ananas.'²⁸ In complaining of insults, it may be that Sayat'-Nova was emulating the Baron in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* who, according to Voltaire, 'voulait bien qu'on rît un peu, pourvu que ce ne fût pas de lui.' For elsewhere the poet describes himself as a jester (*khumari*), perhaps, like Heine, God's jester.²⁹ Perhaps at

²⁸ *ananasom zolotim*, ch. 1, st. xvi. At roughly the same time, Pushkin's friend the Polish Lithuanian poet Mickiewicz declares himself willing to forego the red mulberries and golden pineapples (*złote ananasy*) of Odessa if he could return to his native land (*Sonety krymskie*, no. xiv, *Pielgrzym* (The Pilgrim), 1825-6). In his exhaustive commentary on Pushkin's poem, Vladimir Nobokov observes that 'throughout the nineteenth century this fruit was deemed in Russia a symbol of high living' (*Alexandr Pushkin, Eugene Onegin ... translated from the Russian with a commentary*, paperback edition, Princeton University Press, 1975, vol. II, pp. 74-75). The fruit, native to America, had its admirers in England, James Thomson in 1727 apostrophising it as 'thou best anana, thou the pride / Of vegetable life, beyond whate'er / The poets imag'd in the golden age', *Summer*, cit. Nabokov, *ibid.*). The problems of import into 19th century Russia being insuperable, the fruit was cultivated by rich landowners in hothouses, though not in those of the like of Onegin's impoverished neighbours, the Larins, as Nabokov notes, adding 'By 1820 ingenious horticulturalists were replacing with metal pipes and hot steam the old-fashioned flues of forcing houses, and already the mandarin orange was ripened in Edinburgh, St. Petersburg, and Riga. Peaches were found to be much hardier than it had been thought; and pineapples were amazed at what they were made to do' (*ibid.*, p. 327). The pineapple remains an exotic fruit for the Russians, who have not solved their import problems. A report by James Flannery in *The Times* of 13th April 1992 describes Moscow entrepreneurs 'standing in the chill pre-spring winds, clutching exotic fruit such as pineapples, family heirlooms, a bottle of brandy, a teapot, anything that might conceivably lure a buyer'. With respect to the other vegetable at the bottom of Ioane's scale, common and acrid, one recalls that the Armenian slang word for a Russian is *sokh* 'onion', though this may derive, as much as from xenophobia, from the Russians' fondness for the vegetable: wherever a Russian has a plot of land, there he plants an onion patch (e.g. the Russian monk in Jerusalem in Stephen Graham's *With the Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem*). Such an image could have been in Ioane's mind: though primarily Georgian-speaking, he was an Armenian, and he was writing in St. Petersburg.

²⁹ The reading in *Anbant' k'eba* 'Eulogy of the Alphabet' (B's title), st. 5 v. 3 is far from certain. In Baramidze's edition (no source given) the second hemistich reads *Khan khumari var, ghvt'inari* (rhyming with *vin ari, dzinari*) '*Kh* I am a jester, *ghvt'inari*.' This last strange form may point to *ghvt'-is* 'of God', *ghvt'-iani* 'godly', but the suffix *-nar-* is attested in standard Georgian only as a nominal formant of assemblies of plants (*khekhili* 'fruit-tree', *khekhil-nari* 'orchard', Vogt, *Grammaire*, §3.12). Ioane fol. 11 reads *ghvinari*, which suggest **ghvi-nari* (*ghvia* 'juniper', *ghvi-iani* 'mit Wacholder bewachsen(er Ort)', Tsch) 'juniper grove', which defies comprehension in the context. A slight emendation would give *ghvt'is nari* 'God's male camel', which recalls an ancient insult to the Prophet and would not be contrary to SN's satirical turn of mind; but the *-s-* ruins the rhyme. The word may have nothing to do with God. I suggested elsewhere (*Raft*, vol. 2, 1988, p. 43, n. 14) that, as occasionally in Ioane, *gh* is written for *q*, and that a **qut'anari* may be connected with *qut'ani* 'textile of silk and cotton' (Ch', Tsch) which would be in line with the poet's description of himself as one dressed in satin and silk (B p. 21), clad in a strange garb (B p. 17); but the vocalisation and the suffix *-ar-* are wrong for this, and the suggestion must now be withdrawn. The difficulties remain.

the Georgian court he was getting as good as he gave, for his wit is well attested. Puns, like Shakespeare, he could not resist. Parody of his own and his fellow love-poets' craft, again like Shakespeare (though a recent critic has with mind-baffling exaggeration dubbed all his Sonnets parodies,³⁰ some appear to be so), was another of his indulgences: who, for example, can take seriously his Azeri poem in which he compares his beloved's moles, nineteen in number, with the deep sea, the mountain gazelle, pearls, rubies, the main square of Tiflis, etc.?³¹ One scholar, D.M. Lang,³² has ascribed to him the wit of the Tiflis *kinto*, 'a distinctively clad street-trader in Old Tiflis, who hawked fruit and vegetables on a round tray and was celebrated for his native wit', figuratively 'a wag, a joker' (Tschenkeli). Tschenkeli lists also the colloquial verb *kintoebi* 'to adopt the ways or manners of the *kinto*, and the adjective *kintouri* as the name of the *kinto*'s dance (Meckelein's *kinti* 'Wurzelende', root-end, suggest that the etymology of *kinto* might lie there, but the word is not listed by Tschenkeli). To compare Sayat'-Nova with a *kinto* might seem tantamount to comparing Oscar Wilde with Max Miller. But true wit knows no social distinctions: one can hear remarks on a London bus as rib-tickling as others in a Royal Shakespeare Company production. Sayat'-Nova was a man of the people, and one who performed in Tiflis squares before becoming attached to the court. No doubt he had broken a lance or two with kintos plying their trade among his audience, just as Shakespeare, also a public performer, must have delighted in teasing his Cockney spectators with the outrageous puns, even in his sublimest plays, that were rarely above their own level — though it must be said at once that Sayat'-Nova can nowhere be accused of obscenity.

Wherever Sayat'-Nova has sharpened his wit, he did not hesitate to direct it against the nobility who frequented the Georgian court. Two short quatrains addressed to Prince Mzechabuk Orbeliani contain obscure allusions difficult to unravel today, but there is no doubt that they are in criticism of their subject's newly acquired wealth, and resulting standoffishness, a caricature:

Aragvsa gavsdvit' khidia.
ak'lems khurjini hkidia.

³⁰ Katharine M. Wilson, *Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets*, 1974.

³¹ *Agêr nazlu khali dêirsân* 'If you talk of my graceful beloved's mole(s)', T fol. 50, Arasli, p. 43.

³² *Art. cit. supra*, ch. 1, p. 38, n. 130.

es darbazi ra didia.

hoi, ho, hoi, ho!

aghar vitqvi amis met.

t'unda tselshi damkar ket,

margaliti gasakhvret.

hoi, ho, hoi, ho!

'We have built a bridge over the Araxes.

The saddle-bags hang on the camel.

This palace, how huge it is!

Hi-ho, hi-ho!

I no longer speak with this one,

Though he digs me in the waist with a stick,

(As though I were) a pearl to be bored.

Hi-ho, hi-ho!'

Another parody with musical accompaniment is directed at a high church dignitary that some have identified as one of the minstrel's most dangerous enemies, the Catholicos Anton:

Utsmideso patriark'o,

ghirseulad unda gak'o.

amboben jibeshi gak'o — ra uqav?

gulshi damazile t'op'i.

sakhelit'a mk'vian sop'i.

davkarge ch'emi kolop'i — ra uqav?

'Most Holy Patriarch,

I must praise you³³ worthily.

They say, you felt an itch³³ in your pocket — what did you do with it?

(Here he ran a stick up and down the neck of his *ch'onguri* for a time)³⁴

You have fired³⁵ a gun at my heart.

They call me by name³⁶ Sophia (itself).³⁷

I have lost my purse³⁸ — what did you do with it?'

(Then he pulls out his pocket, which he has torn,³⁹ and displays it)

³³ There is a pun on *ga-k'o* 'I shall praise you', and *gak'o* which must be an aorist of *k'av-eba* (*m-k'ava* 'it makes me itch') with the dative second person singular object pronoun.

³⁴ These descriptions of Sayat'-Nova's gestures accompanying his verses accompany the text in B p. 32, from which both parodies are quoted.

³⁵ *da-ma-zil-e*: Tschenkeli lists as colloquial *da-v-a-zel(av) mas t'op's* 'to fire a shot at someone from above', aor. *v-a-zil-e*.

³⁶ Reading *sakhelit'a* for B *sakhelat'a*.

³⁷ *sop'i*, probably Greek *sophia* 'wisdom'; the vocalisation makes APT *şûfi* unlikely.

³⁸ *kolop'i* 'small box', here for money ('Geld-kästchen', Tsch), which could be made of silver, with interior leather compartments.

³⁹ *gakheuli hkonda* lit. 'he made it torn', i.e. pretended to tear it, as distinct from *ga-s-khia* 'he (really) tore it.'

Though the allusions were certain to be understood by Sayat'-Nova's contemporaries, we can only guess at them. The wound to the heart, and the loss of the purse, may be what the poet himself suffered at the hand of the Catholicos. His gesture of turning out his pocket, in the manner of a clown, shows that he is broke. His gesture of running a stick up and down the neck of his Georgian lute (it is of interest that he employed this instrument of accompaniment for *chansonnier* turns rather than his beloved violin) represents the Catholicos scratching an itch, and/or firing a gun. Why the minstrel says 'they call me by name Sophia/Wisdom' is not clear: it may be meant as put in the mouth of the Catholicos. These things are not clear. What is clear, however, is the accusation that the Catholicos is reputed to feel an itch in his pocket. There is not a language in the world spoken by people who wear pockets in which this would not be crystal clear. There are, moreover, a number of Armenian proverbs directed against clerical greed, against vardapets' bellies and pockets that must be filled. Sayat'-Nova may even be slyly referring to that which says, *Terteri p'orē mets kēla, chepē okhtē hat* 'If the priest's belly is full, he has seven more in his pocket'.⁴⁰ That the Catholicos Anton had good reason to take offence cannot be doubted. The gibe was, however, probably not aimed so much at any alleged desire for personal enrichment on the part of the head of the Georgian Church, as against church policies initiated by him that laid heavy expenses on the people, including Sayat'-Nova. And for once the minstrel was on the winning side in his battles with the nobility, for it was Anton who was banished from Georgia together with five Georgian priests and one Armenian on 17th December 1755 for aiding and abetting Roman Catholic missions in Tiflis, no doubt with contributions from Georgian church funds. It may be that Sayat'-Nova celebrated this event with his satire, though it would show him in a better light if this in fact had been earlier, part of a popular campaign, for one hesitates to impute to him a spirit of spiteful, and safe, exultation. We cannot know. We do not know either whether Anton was a vindictive man. But it is possible that Sayat'-Nova had made himself a dangerous enemy. Anton was of the blood royal, being a Mukhranian Bagratid, nephew of T'eimurazi I. He was not recalled from Russia, where he took refuge, until 1762, reconciled with Irakli II, and entrusted with the desired revival of learning in the Georgian kingdom. By then Sayat'-Nova had himself gone into exile. But during his period

⁴⁰ Listed by A.T. Ghanalyantz', *Aratsani*, Erevan, 1960, p. 303.

of exile, Anton would have had powerful friends and relations among the Georgian nobility who could have had a negative influence on the poet's career. After 1762, reestablished as head of the Georgian Church, he might well have been able to blight what remained of the career of the Armenian monk. There is, however, no evidence that he did anything of the sort. He was a man of wisdom and learning, to whom Georgian culture owes much.⁴¹ And high church dignitaries who can take a joke are not unknown. On the other hand, one can see reasons why a churchman might well take exception to the way of life of a minstrel. Music has from the beginning played a rôle in synagogue, church, and mosque, but it is an uneasy one, beset with would-be pious conventions. One recalls that trumpets were not allowed in Italian churches in the 18th century, and that a special bowed trapezoid lute with one string was devised to accompany the choir. None of the instruments played by Sayat'-Nova, *k'amanch'a*, *tambura*, and *ch'onguri*, would have been welcome in church, nor would the type of song that Sayat'-Nova sang, however much they had in common with that traditionally ascribed to Solomon, which does not form any part of the liturgy in any case. Sayat'-Nova insists that he is a believer, though one of the Armenian persuasion, which the Georgian branch of the Greek Orthodox Church would consider heterodox. Then, as we shall see later, several of his many Azeri songs manifest sympathy with Islamic religious thought. There is a possibility that the phrase in his satire against Anton, *sakhe-lit'a mk'vian sop'i*, which we have preferred to translate as 'by name they call me Sophia/Wisdom', may after all, despite the vocalisation, mean 'by name they call me a *sûfi*': the poet's mystic *ilâhi*'s could well be responsible for such a reputation, and its mention in the satire, then defiantly, even shamelessly, might suggest that the accusation had been levelled against him by Anton's faithful. On Anton's return to power in 1762, however, Sayat'-Nova was, theologically, for an Armenian, on the straight and narrow; whether Anton in 1759, from St. Petersburg, by advice to the king or influence on his advisers, suggested what to do about the disgraced minstrel, can be only a matter for conjecture. What is certain, however, is that Anton by himself cannot have been the cause of Sayat'-Nova's downfall.

⁴¹ On Anton, see M.-F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, II.ii. pp. 234, 237; W.E.D. Allen, *A history of the Georgian people*, pp. 175-176, 201; L. Melik'set'-Bek, *Vratz' aghbiwrnerë Hayastani ew Hayeri masin* [Georgian sources concerning Armenia and the Armenians], 3, p. 109; H pp. xxvi-xxvii.

There have been suggestions that the poet's difficulties were of a political nature. Literary Marxists of the Procrustean kind strive hard to claim Sayat'-Nova as an early sympathiser. 'On the divide between two epochs, that of obsolescent feudalism and nascent bourgeoisie, towers the figure of the remarkable *ashugh*, humanist and democrat', writes Gaysaryan.⁴² Sayat'-Nova, though a believer who most likely did not know what a humanist is, does for a court minstrel display what might be described as populist sentiments. *Me glekhi var, t'avadoba ar minda* 'I am a peasant, I have no wish to be a prince', he protests, but this in the context of an appeal to the King evidently in rebuttal of some such charge, which probably also mentioned the silks and satins in which he had been clothed (*sheminakhe atlasit'a khasit'a*), which he has no wish to exchange for a black caftan with black seam (*shavi kaba, shavi k'oba*), which reminds one of the contrasted proud livery of youth and the tattered weeds of age of Shakespeare (*Sonnets*, 2, 3-4). It is not clear whether the black clothes refer to his former peasant's dress, or, more likely, to a threat already to force him into holy orders. And still he insists that his garden be beside that of his patron (*sheni baghi ch'emi baghis gverdt'iqos*).⁴³ This is the work of one that has risen in the world, and is anxious to defend and retain his privileges (something that has more in common with Marxist practice than its practitioners like to admit), but which does not amount to a passion for democracy. No doubt, for some Georgian courtiers, Sayat'-Nova counted as the sort of social climber that Sayat'-Nova condemned in his Azeri poem against parvenus (*nov k'esalar*).⁴⁴

Some writers, imagining that the Armenian in Sayat'-Nova resented the fact that much of Armenia, including Erevan, was ruled by the King of Georgia, have imputed to him sentiments of irredentism, though there is not the slightest hint of them in any of his writings. His name has been linked to the liberation schemes of Joseph Emin, who arrived in Tiflis and had discussions with Irakli, who was not long in banishing him, together with a number of like-minded Armenian activists, from his territory.⁴⁵ But this occurred in 1762, when Sayat'-Nova was himself no longer in Tiflis, and thus most unlikely to have had any dealings

⁴² *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴³ *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, st. 1, v. 5, st. 2, vv. 4-5, st. 3, v. 4, B pp. 21-22, Ioane, fol. 9.

⁴⁴ T p. 81, I fol. 32.

⁴⁵ H p. xxviii.

with Emin that could have affected his downfall in 1759. That he had anything to do with Emin's activities in Daghestan in 1765, when Emin witnessed the Lezghian actions against Irakli in which, to Emin's admiration, Armenians took part, is,⁴⁶ on the part of the priest into which Sayat'-Nova had by then been transformed, even more unlikely, and certainly unattested.

And yet. There were ideas abroad in the 18th century, as Joseph Emin bore witness, that would eventually overturn the old order of principally those monarchs of Germany and Russia who offered Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot spiritual and financial encouragement. One can safely assume that some had achieved currency on the meidan of Tiflis where Sayat'-Nova had operated. Not that he did not have ideas of his own. Several poems show that he was well aware of the social distance between a peasant such as he declared himself proud to be, and the privileged members of the royal circles in which he functioned, and a poet, such as Plato would ban from his Republic, is a man who can think and put his thoughts into words. He did not hesitate to say what he thought of nobles, and was not averse to offering the King advice on how to rule justly. He was a vocal critic of society, even if he did appear to accept the injustices suffered by the humble as the way of the world. His didactic poems seem to offer sound, even cynical, traditional advice, but in hearing them, his audience may have found it difficult to ignore the nagging thought that they were the products of a man skilled in allegory and double-entendres. Ioane who, given his interest in his poetic patrimony, must have known his father well, refers in his annotations several times to hidden meanings and opinions (*t'ejnisi*, *igavi*, *magalit'i*, *azri*). It would not have been wise openly to express liberal and progressive ideas at his time and in his place, and in the surrounding kingdoms and empires they could cost one one's head. When Sayat'-Nova warns, 'If you feed the orphan and the beggar for a hundred years, in the end, if you need help, they will sell your blood',⁴⁷ is he being serious? Such worldly-wise advice is un-Christian, running contrary to that of e.g. James, who in his Epistle recommends his brothers to help the orphans and widows (1,27) and the poor (2,15). Was he perhaps acting like Heine, who declared himself in print a royalist and no democrat just in order to 'smuggle' French ideas into

⁴⁶ See Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁷ *Nov k'esalar* [Nouveaux-riches], st. 2, vv. 3-4, T p. 81, I fol. 32, H p. 201. See below, p. 207.

Germany?⁴⁸ An Armenian critic of society had in fact no need of French ideas. He had the Bible, and unlike the ordinary French catholic who had no access to Scriptures except in Latin, the Armenian could read them in his own language, even if it were in an ancient and difficult form. And in the Scriptures one could find justification for a multitude of political standpoints, from the right (Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's) to left (They held all things in common, *Acts*, 2,44). And as to method, Brecht's 'Cunning is needed for the truth to be spread'⁴⁹ had been long anticipated by Jesus' advice that, when among wolves, one should be as wise as serpents (*Matt.* 10.16). No doubt Sayat'-Nova, who knew his scriptures, could have found justification for his occasionally forked tongue in that. We do not know for sure what thoughts were in his mind. Certainly, when he says 'A curse upon the fidelity of the drinker of raw milk' he was not preaching infidelity, but lamenting that the labourer was not found worthy of his hire. One thing is sure: Sayat'-Nova was not only a singer of the Nightingale and the Rose.

Although the poet's downfall can be reliably dated as occurring in 1759, there are indications already in his compositions of 1758 that he was in that year subject to much mental stress, whatever the actual cause or immediate trigger may have been. One is helped in this investigation into the psychological development of the poet by the fact that, though, as usual, no dates are given for any Georgian poems for this or any other year, twelve Armenian and fourteen Azeri songs bear the date 1758, eleven giving the month of composition or recital, and nine of those the actual day of the month. 1758 must have been one of Sayat'-Nova's most prolific years for, not counting any Georgian songs, he composed on an average two full poems a month. I have elsewhere⁵⁰ characterised the poet's songs of 1758 and 1759 as swan-songs, a last burst of divine fire like the flame of a candle that flares up before guttering out for ever. This is vividly expressed in musical terms by the West African (Bornu) proverb, 'When the drum sounds its best, it is about to tear',⁵¹ presum-

⁴⁸ Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. H. Kaufmann, Berlin, 1961, Bd. VI, p. 244 (ref. from P. Peters, *Henrich Heine, 'Dichterjude'*, Frankfurt a. M., 1990, p. 32).

⁴⁹ Berthold Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 18, Frankfurt a. M., 1967, p. 238 (ref. from P. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 31).

⁵⁰ 'A swan-song by Sayat'-Nova' [*Ashkharës me panjara ê*], *Raft*, vol. 2, 1988, p. 37.

⁵¹ 'Wenn die Trommel am schönsten klingt, ist sie kurz vor dem Zerreißen', Eva Lips, *Weisheit zwischen Eis und Urwald — Vom Humor der Naturvölker*, Leipzig, 1959, p. 234 (presumably quoting Rudolf Prietze, 'Bornusprichwörter', *Mitt. d. Sem. f. or.*

ably when the skin has worn thin to breaking point, like a poet's nerves. One must note, however, since it may be a sign that all was not well, that a greater preoccupation with sincerity of sentiment was accompanied by a certain neglect, most surely not of poetic form, but of musicianship, for eleven of the Armenian odes of 1758 and 1759 (we have no such information concerning the Azeri and Georgian songs) were all performed in the same mode, perhaps in the same tune, namely, *Diba u yengi-dunya* 'Brocade and New World (Cotton).' The Azeri songs, as will be seen, are largely moralistic and didactic. The Armenian songs of 1758 are, however, mainly complaints of unrequited love, palpably sincere, and these must be one's first consideration.

Some of the 1758 Armenian poems are, in an oriental fashion, fairly conventional. There is much in praise of the beloved, who is clearly no village maiden, and whose description could well fit, to refer again to tradition, a royal princess such as Ana, the sister of the Georgian king Irakli II:

Angin akĕn vĕret sharats, anban osku rakht is, gozal ...
Astuvadz k'iz u nĕran pahĕ, um hid vur nĕvakht is, gozal.
*Bĕlbulin lizu shinetz'ir, dun vart'i dĕrakht is, gozal.*⁵²

'Priceless jewels are strung about you, you are an ineffable golden vessel, beautiful one ...

May God preserve you and him with whom you dally, beautiful one.

You have given tongue to the Nightingale, you are a rose-bush, beautiful one.'

In a manner that inevitably recalls Shakespeare's *The throne she sat on...*, even the beloved's furniture is lauded: it is clearly fit for a queen (or a royal princess), as is her identification with the Persian throne itself:

Patirĕt zarov zarbabov, doshamet khalov khalich'ov.
Takhtaknirĕn ĕrtsat'emen, mikhirĕn oskĕ gulich'ov.
*Khosrov p'ach'aemen*⁵³ *t'oghats, dun T'ovuzi takht is, gozal.*

'Your walls are decorated with gold and silk, your sofa with carpets large and small.

Your chairs are silver, their studs with golden heads.

Bequeathed by King Chosroes, you are yourself the Peacock Throne, beautiful one!'

Spr. a. d.Königl. Friedr.-Wilhelm-Univ. zu Berlin, Jhrg. XVIII, 3te Abt., Berlin, 1915, p. 107 ff.).

⁵² I fol. 65A, T p. 122, H p. 50.

⁵³ Although S.-N. thus represents PT *pâd-shâh* 'king', it would have been better if his transcription avoided confusion with PT *pâcha* "little foot", i.e. '(sheeps') trotters; trousers'.

Although there would be usually no need to take it literally, for perfect bliss is not one of the poet's major themes, the lover is melancholy, and has thoughts of death:

Irgnutz' věret dzun ê êki, p'unj manishak nur is, janēm.

Modèt nēstoghēn ku êrvi, et nazi tēr vur is, janēm.

Dir Sayat'-Noven ch'ê miri, dun inch'i tēkhur is, janēm.

T'ak' is mīrnim, dun sagh ēlis, gerezmanēs vagh, janēm.

'From the heavens snow has fallen upon you, you are a fresh bunch of violets, my love.

He who sits beside you burns, you are the possessor of such grace.

Sayat'-Nova has not yet died. Why are you sad, my love?

May I alone die, as long as you are well, my grave (will be) an early one, my love.'

Sappho burned to see her beloved sitting close to another: Φαίνε-
ται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν | ἔμμεν' ὄνῃῃ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι |
ἰσδάνει... Sayat'-Nova, like many a medieval minstrel before him,
knew what it was like to sit beside one unattainable. There is in this
song a clear indication that the beloved was no longer in the first flush
of youth, for what else can the snow said to have fallen upon her
mean other than that her hair has silver flecks at least, in Shake-
speare's phrase 'beauty o'ersnow'd' (*Sonnets*, 5, 8). Sayat'-Nova
looks upon what the English poet abhorred as 'hideous winter', 'win-
ter's ragged hand', though Caucasian winters make British winters
seem ridiculously mild, with equanimity, and as a symbol of *tempus
edax*, with compassion, with undiminished love. As we shall see,
there are other poems which suggest the beloved is no longer young.
This could well be the 'inward touch' of sincerity that for Sir Philip
Sidney distinguished true poetic sentiment from mere 'swelling
phrases', 'firie speeches', and regurgitated sighs by which no woman
should be fooled.⁵⁴ There is another indication that this on the face of
it conventional *plainte* is to be taken seriously, namely, a note in
Georgian at the end of the poem in the *Tetrak* that reads 'Christ God
forgive Arut'in Sayat'nova, slain by his beloved, chronicon 446 [A.D.
1758]⁵⁵'. One would not normally take the phrase 'slain by his
beloved' seriously. But the appeal to God on the part of a man not

⁵⁴ *A defence of poetry*, ed. J. Van Doren, 1966, p. 70, *Astrophil and Stella*, st. 15, *cit.* Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, London (1979), 1983, p. 55.

⁵⁵ *K'(riste) ghmert'man sheundos iarisagan maktuli arut'ina saiat'novas k'.* UMZ, T p. 123.

known to be flippant in matters of religion gives one pause. The prayer may stem from genuine distress. Sayat'-Nova was not to be 'slain' in 1759: but as a poet he died, or was killed off. And the phrase 'has *not yet died*' (*dir Sayat'-Noven ch'ê mîri*) sounds an ominous note.

The *angin akên* song of 1758 bears no indication of month or day, but if the sentiments there expressed are serious, and if, as one hopes to show on the evidence of the 1758 songs that are specified in the *Tetrak* as belonging to a particular month, one may discern a progressive deterioration in the poet's mental state, that poem does not belong to the beginning of the year. The love-song *T'amam ashkhar pêtut êka ch'ê-t'oghi Habash, nazani / Ch'ê-tesa k'u didari pês...* 'I have travelled the whole world over, I did not omit Abyssinia, / (But) I never saw a pleasure-to-behold such as you'⁵⁶ would seem to belong to the beginning of the year, before any cloud was seen on the horizon. Whether in fact the poet had ever been to Abyssinia, which, as has been discussed above,⁵⁷ is not impossible, or whether the journey took place only in his mind's eye, so that he could assure the beloved that she had no rivals, white or black, the song is one of the poet's finest,⁵⁸ though its imagery is, as he himself shows ('let me say it in Persian') fairly conventional in its oriental exaggeration:

Dun ên gëlkhên juhârdar is, vëret zarnishan ê k'ashats...
Eresêt, p'arsevar asim, nêman ê shamsh u qamarin.
Barak mîch'kit t'irman shalên nêman ê oskê k'amarin.
Qalamên dzirin ch'ê kang(n)um, mat' shînetz'ir naqêshk'arin.
*Ip' nêstum is t'ut'i qush is, ip' kangnum is, Rash, nazani.*⁵⁹

'You are altogether a damascened sword,⁶⁰ on you arabesques are drawn in gold...

⁵⁶ T p. 124, I fol. 66, H p. 51.

⁵⁷ Chapter Two, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁸ Though it figures (no. 35), last, in twenty-fourth place overall, of Hasrat'yan's third league, comprised of songs that appeal strongly to others (p. xx).

⁵⁹ St. 3, v. 1, st. 4, vv. 1-4. The *q* (q) of the *Tetrak*'s Georgian script has been retained, as doubtless representing the poet's own pronunciation of the APT words; as is normal, Hasrat'yan (p. 51) reproduces the words with Armenian *gh* (ղ); if S.-N. so pronounced them, he would have written them with Georgian *gh* (წ).

⁶⁰ PT *jauhar-dâr* lit. 'possessing jewels', 'a bright, glittering or well-tempered scimitar, possessing the blackish marks called *jauhar* ('jewel'), S. S.-N. was doubtless aware of the extended PT meaning of *jauhar* as 'essential property, skill, accomplishment, art, worth, virtue' (S), possibly also of the meanings, not listed by Redhouse for Turkish but asserted by Steingass, of 'secret nature, defects, vices': it seems unlikely, however, that S.-N. expected his audience to think of the latter, but one can never be sure about the intended extent of the poet's word-play.

Your countenance, let me say it in Persian, is like the *shams* (sun) and the *qamar* (moon).

The shawl of figured silk around your waist is like a golden girdle.

The pen wilts in the artist's hand, you have given him mate.

When you sit, you are like a (bright) parrot, when you stand, like Rash
[Rustahm's steed], O gracious one.'

This is the poem where Sayat'-Nova declares that he is not *nawwâs*, a waverer. He is insistent, hoping for encouragement from the beloved, who has set him aflame:

Is ên Sayat'-Novasên ch'em, vur avzi vëra himnanam.

Ajab mizi din is kamum, sêrtêt me khabar imanam.

Dun kêrak, hak'atsêt kêrak, vur me kêrakin dimanam?

'I am not Sayat'-Novas ("the Waverer"), for my foundations to rest on sand.

I wonder, do you want us to be religious?⁶¹ Let me have a message from your heart.

You are fire, your dress is fire, how can I withstand such fire?'

Another Armenian song of 1758 with no indication of day or month, which, full of passionate aspirations, gives no real hint of actual trouble other than a doubtless hypothetical rival, mentions a separation from the beloved that has lasted for one year. It would, however, unwise to base upon this any theory of a separation on Sayat'-Nova's part from the Georgian court from 1757 to 1758, for it can be little more than a literary conceit concerning the Wandering Nightingale's visit to the Rose, conceived as taking place in the *saison des roses* in spring or early summer, which might, however, allow one to place the performance of this song in the first half of 1758. The mention of absence 'from the garden' suggests that *al fresco* entertainments had begun with the warmer weather, the 'Wandering Nightingale' having spent the winter, with the rest of the court, indoors.

⁶¹ T *mizid iniskamum*, I *mizid ich'is kamum*, from which Hasrat'yan assembles *mizid inch' is kamum*. But *mizid* is an impossible form for 'to/for us', -d or -t being the enclitic 2nd person pronoun. T's reading may be analysed as *Ajab mizi din is kamum* 'I wonder, do you want religion (APTaz *din*) for us?' Arm *din, den* (lwd, Avestan *daena*) usually refers to 'a non-Christian religion' (Malkhasyantz'), but SN uses it for 'religion' in general (APTaz *din*) in *Saiat'nova dini sai: ink'ar et'mas, ermani dur* ('Consider Sayat'-Nova's religion: There is no denying it, it is Armenian', T p. 62). The phrase might mean 'I wonder, do you want us (to be united by marriage in) the (Muslim?) religion?' The poet has, after all, praised his beloved in Persian. If there is anything in I's reading, one might suggest an emendation to **Ajab mizi du inch' is kamum* 'I wonder, what do you want for us' (for *ajab* in connection with *inch'* cf. *Ajab k'iz inch' get' im ari* 'I wonder what offence I have done you', in *Me khosk unim*, st. 1 v. 3, below, p. 164).

*Vuntz'or vur qarib bulbulën me tariv baghin karot ê,
 Ênentz' gu la k'u siroghën, dzerit araghi{a}n karot ê.
 Dun urishi hid mi khosi, k'u churtën aghin karot ê.
 Hasil ê tsutz'it shamamën, oskê t'abaghin karot ê ...*

*Dun khom ên gëlkhën govats is, k'iz nurmek govim, ari.
 Tsut'ët varaghnats hëjra ê, hot unê mushk u ambari...*

*Is êl urish iar ch'im siri, ashkharumës dun is imën.
 T'e me shap'at' k'iz ch'im tesni, ku këtrim k'amanch'i simën.
 T'eguz t'ak'avurën kanch'e, t'eguz Loghma(n)i hek'imën,
 Vur me dards ku haskanan, dugunës daghin karot ê ...*

*Ashkh(ar)ës umn ê mënatz'i, vur indz u k'iz mëna, gozal.
 Makam miṛav Saiat'-Noven, angachët khaghin karot ê.⁶²*

'Since the wandering Nightingale has been missing from the garden for one year,

Therefore he who loves you weeps, as missing the intoxicating-liquor ('araq) from your hand.

Do not speak with another, the serf misses his master.

The honey-melons of your bosom are ripe, they lack a golden bowl (? worthy to contain them)...

You have been ever highly praised, (but) come, let me praise you anew. Your bosom is a leafy arbour,⁶³ it has the scent of musk and ambergris...

I shall love no other, in this world you are mine.

If I do not see you for a week, I shall break the strings of my violin.

Though the King should summon (a doctor), though he be Loqmân the Wise,

That they might understand one affliction of mine, my wound (will still) need cauterisation.

For whomsoever this world remains, let it remain for you and me, beautiful one.

So long as Sayat'-Nova is not dead, will your ear want for songs?'

An important poem of 1758 is *Modët nëstoghënkü harp'i* 'He who sits near you will become intoxicated', which recalls Sappho's ode of controlled jealousy occasioned by one who sits by her beloved (ὤνηρ ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι / ἰσδάνει). The similarity between these phrases is probably fortuitous, due to the common theme, since the continuation of this poem by Sayat'-Nova coincides little with that of the Lesbian poetess, though elsewhere their protestations of passion may be advanta-

⁶² T pp. 120-121, H p. 45.

⁶³ Badly written in T, in Georgian script, as *hjdra*, in which the otiose -d- would have been better placed before -j-; APT *hujra*^h 'chamber, closet, cell'.

geously compared.⁶⁴ *Modēt nēstoghēn* is important, as has been mentioned above,⁶⁵ for possibly containing a clue to the identity of his beloved, as one of superior social station, possibly one of royal blood, and as the object of his untoward attentions in 1758, possibly the cause of his downfall. Though the poem must have been present in the *Tetrak* when Akhverdyan made his edition in 1852, it is no longer there, and Ioane's version of 1823 comprises only four of Akhverdyan's five stanzas. The date of 446 of the chronicon, A.D. 1758, must derive from the *Tetrak*, Ioane, as usual, giving no date, though his note to the effect that the poem was addressed to a noble, renowned friend may be more than imaginative literary criticism.⁶⁶ The following text is based upon Hasrat'yan's version taken mainly from Akhverdyan, and Ioane:

*Modēt^a nēstoghēn ku^b harp'i, dun^c bang u boza is, aziz^d
divana P'ahlul ku^b shinis tesnoghine, aza^f is, aziz^g
inch' tigh^h nēstis,ⁱ shnuk' ku tas, mejlisi maz is, aziz.^g
mazen me sahat' lav ku li^j, dun^c haman t'aza is, aziz.^g*

*Me khoskēt^a k'antz^k shak'ar k'aghtzē^l, me khoskēt^a var, k'ura k'ura.^m
me nēmanēt^a řashi nēman, me nēmanēt^a jura jura.
mark'aritov lik'ēn kal isⁿ, sadap'nirēt^a t'ura t'ura.
ērtsat'e kokhpek'ov kokhpats^o, dun^c oske řaza is, aziz.^g*

*Ēresēt arivutvan ariv, k'ani keha ku zargana.^p
t'ak'avuri k'arkhani zar, tsarēn ch'i t'argana.
t'e such' unenam ēspanē^q, t'e ch'ē nahakh mi bargana.
me dzerēt jur, me dzerit arun, jallat'i jaza is, aziz.*

*Tesnoghēn nakhshēt^r ku^b tēndghe, p'arshevangi^s bēmbuli^t pes.^u
dzēni taken^v nur dus ēkats, ariv dibats^w sēnbuli pes.*

a I t'. **b** I k(ē). **c** I du. **d** I -ss. **e** I tesnoghi. **f** Amended by H on I and Akhverdyan *jaza*. **g** I -s. **h** I; H *tegh*. **j** I k(ē)li. **k** I k'anz. **l** I kakhtz'(ē)r. **m** This is I's st. 3. **n** I maliz. **o** I kop'pats. **p** This stanza is missing in I. **q** H vocalises this as *sēpane*, which may perhaps be a justifiable dialect form. **r** I *tahr*. **s** I *en p'arshevangi*. **t** I *bnbuli*. **u** This is I's st. 2. **v** I *tnken*. **w** I -tz'.

⁶⁴ Below, Chapter Nine, pp. 366-8.

⁶⁵ Above, Chapter Three, p. 113.

⁶⁶ H no. (Arm) 40, p. 56, note to 40; Ioane, fol. 69, his annotation reading *saiat'novas ert'i azizi sakhelovani megobari hqolia es k'ovloba* [for *k'ebuleba*?] *imazed ukhramebia mokhamazis khmazed aris* 'Sayat'-Nova apparently-has a noble renowned friend; he has-apparently-applied this eulogy (?) to her/him; it is in the *mukhammas* mode.' The use of the *t'urmeobit'i*, perfect/dubitative verbal forms (e.g. *hqolia* 'he has but I have not witnessed it' and not e.g. *hqavs*, *qvis* 'he has', *hqavda*, *hqvanda* 'he had') suggests that Ioane is not sure of this circumstance, which he may have deduced merely from the text

*t'ugh vēret^a lalov pētut gam^x, vart'i karot'y bēlbuli^z pes.
dun^c indz shutov mi t'ērtz'ēni, shavardan baza is, aziz.^g*

*Êshkhemet^{aa} hivandatz'il im, vuntz^c zarar, vuntz^c shah in asum.^{bb}
hek'imnirēs ap'sosum^{cc} in, tsēngan talov vah^{dd} in asum.
kanch'oghēs^{ee} dardak ê gēnum. akh Saiat'nova, in asum.
t'ak^{ff} dun^c gē^{gg} kas, vir ku^{hh} kenam, t'e sazis saza is, aziz.^g*

'He who sits near you becomes intoxicated, you are drugs and drink, noble one.

You turn the beholder into a Mad Fahlul, you are a love-potionⁱⁱ, noble one.

In whatever place you sit, you give it beauty; you are the appetizer (*mezze*) of the assembly, noble one.

(But) the herbs remain good for one hour only: you are always fresh, noble one.

One word of yours is sweeter than sugar, one word of yours burns, an oven! an oven!

One who resembles you is like Râsh [Rustahm's steed], one who resembles you is of-infinite-variety.ⁱⁱ

Your are a threshing-floor^{kk} filled with pearls, your mother-of-pearl is of multiple sheen.^{ll}

Bolted with an iron ring, you are a golden staple,^{mm} noble one.

Your face is the morning sun, it grows as it goes.

(You are?) gold from the factory of a king: the tree will not deviate from its kind.ⁿⁿ

If I am at fault, kill (me); if not, do not be unjustly angry.

In one hand water, in one hand blood, you are the executioner's punishment, noble one.

He who sees your picture will swell up like the tail-feathers of the peacock^{mm}, noble one.

x I *gnam*. **y** I *kartz'ra* [for *k'aghtz'ra*, a strange confusion of *k* for *k'* and *r* for *gh*? *kartsēr* 'short' cannot be meant]. **z** I *bulbuli*. **aa** I *eshkhitz'(ē)t'*. **bb** This is I's st. 4. **cc** I *ap'susum*. **dd** As I, a nearer rhyme than H's *vay*. **ee** I *me grogh(ē)s*. **ff** I *t'e*. **gg** As I; H *ūs*. **hh** I *v(ē)ra*. **ii** The texts have *jaza* 'punishment' which, being the repeat rhyme of st. 3 v. 4, cannot be correct. Hasrat'yan's emendation to *aza* is acceptable, but not in the meaning he gives it of 'torment' (APT *أذا* 'adhâ', the Azeri meaning, *āza* 'mourning' being even more inappropriate), but that of T *eza* = APT *عزا* *ejza*, *ecza* 'drugs, chemicals' (Hony). **jj** *jura jura*, Az *jur-bā-jur* 'varied, diverse, multiple' (Ä), on AT *jūr* 'an exceedingly large quantity' (R). **kk** H; I *maliz* for *mal* is 'you are a treasure/property/possession (APT *mâl*). **ll** *t'ura t'ura*, lit. 'of many kinds', T *türlü türlü* 'of all sorts' (Hony; no equivalent listed by Ä). **mm** On this erotic imagery, see below, Chapter Eight, p. 306, nn. 38, 39. **nn** Lit. 'the tree will not abandon the tree' (*t'arganay* being a bold formation, unlisted, on APT *tark* 'forsaking, leaving', as in P *tark kardan* 'abandon, desert', *tark shudan az* 'leave in the lurch' (S). The idea must be that the beloved is of the blood royal, and that the apple does not fall far from the tree (*Meyve ağacından uzak düşmez*, Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm, Like tree like fruit).

(You have) emerged from under the snow, to face the sun like the hyacinth.
Let me make my way to you a-weeping, like the Nightingale who misses^{oo}
the Rose.

Do not make me quickly fly away.^{pp} You are a falcon, a hawk, noble
one.

For love of you I have fallen ill. There is no profit or loss (in that), they
say.

My doctors lament; sinking to their knees, 'Woe!', they say.

He who calls on me^{qq} goes away empty-handed. 'Alas, Sayat'-Nova!', they
say.

(But) as long as^{rr} you come^{ss}, I shall stand up — if you are (still) the voice
of my saz, noble one!'

The date of this poem suggests that the sentiments are to be taken seriously, and are more than a traditional *plainte*. The poet is aware that he may have done something wrong, and is willing to take his punishment, and that from someone powerful enough to inflict it, one of the royal household, possibly of royal blood. The affair has caused him suffering, to the despair of doctors and friends; but he still hopes that his beloved will visit him and be the inspiration of his songs again, which will give him new life.

In the 1758 songs the poet shows himself repeatedly 'sick with love' and suffering pangs of jealousy ('he who sits by you'). The frequent repetition of these themes, traditional and conventional though they may be, comes close to persuading one that the sentiments may be genuine. *Êshkemet hivandatz'il im, dighi hama im lali* 'I am grown sick for love of you, I cry for a remedy'⁶⁷ is full of striking metaphors for spiritual disasters:

Êshkhemet hivandatz'il im, dighi hama im lali.

Vakhum im, t'e dardên halê, ighi hama im lali.

Shahi kark'ats vek'ili pês gighi hama im lali.

Tanên dus aratsi nêman tighi hama im lali.

^{oo} H; I apparently (see note y above) 'hungers for.' ^{pp} Hasrat'yan, while adopting I's reading, clearly *mi t'rtz'ni*, is under the impression (p. 246) that he wrote *mi p'akhtz'ni* 'do not put to flight.' ^{qq} H; I 'the one writing-to-me.' ^{rr} H; I 'if'. ^{ss} I; H 'come into sight', 'come to see (me)'.

⁶⁷ T p. 138, with the postscript, after a word I cannot decipher from the Erevan facsimile, *K'(ristesa kurt'khevit') ese arut'inas nat'k'omi k'k. UMZ* '(With) Ch(rist's blessing) this was recited by Arut'in in 446 of the chronicon' [A.D. 1758]; Ioane, fol. 61A; H p. 52.

*Me tegh huk'mi hek'im ch'ě ka, duřen êham, kanch'im hara.
Vi kena Loqman hek'iměn, balk'am dardis anê ch'ara.
Tis, t'e inch'pês ê shěp'ot'vi(l), dun im khilk'in mētik ara.
Jurn êkav, geranēs tarav, tsighi hama im lali.*

*Sirtēs êshkhemēn êratz ê, dugunēn daghēn inch' konim.
Vuntz' ghoba unê, vuntz' ch'ap'ar, is ênpēs baghēn inch' konim.
Anghi larēn kētērvil ê, dardak sadaghēn inch' konim.
Nitēs k'arumēn kotretz'i, t'ighi hama im lali.*

*Qalamēn girēs ch'ê gērum, me ch'uratz'ats t'ank'i nēman.
Khoskirēs memek ch'i asvi, imast(n)neru bank'i nēman.
Mech'ēn ch'im kanatz'i mētni, tsovi tsatskats vank'i nēman.
Khostovnaherēs hiratz'av, mighi hama im lali.*

*Gighumēn melik' tanutēr, k'aghak' tighēn Sult'an Khan is.
Baghumēn vart' u manishak, sarumēn sēnbul susan is.
Qabul unê Sayat'-Noven, t'ak' k'u dzirov dun ēspanis.
Mīrnelus hama ch'im hok'um, tz'ighi hama im lali.*

'I am grown sick for love of you, I cry for a remedy.
I am afraid the pain will consume (me), I cry for an ointment.
Like a governor appointed by the Shah, I cry for (my ruined) village.
Like one thrown out of his house, I cry for a place (to stay).

The physician's skill knows no herb for me. I go to the door, and cry,
Help!

Let Loqmân the Wise stand up. Perhaps he has a cure for my pain.
See at what a loss he is. Consider for yourself (the disorder of) my
mind.

The water(s), have come, they have carried off the roof-tree (of my house),
I cry for a straw (to clutch at).

My heart has burned up from love. How can I apply cauterisation to
(such a) wound?

How (tall) the fence (G *ghobe*), how (high) the pallisade, what shall I do
(to enter her) garden?

The string of my bow is broken. What shall I do with an empty quiver?
I have broken my arrow on a rock. I cry for the heap (of sawdust).

The pen will not set down what I write, as though the ink on it had
dried.

My words⁶⁸ will not come out one after the other, like the propositions of
the wise.

I shall not be able to gain entrance, as if it were to a monastery covered by
the sea.

My father-confessor has departed, I cry for my sin.

⁶⁸ Ioane, together with many other variant readings, has *dardirs* 'my sufferings' here, an undoubted lapse of memory, since it makes no sense.

In the village you are prince and lord-of-the-manor, in the city you are Sul-tan (and) Khan.

In the garden you are the Rose and the Violet, in the mountains the Hyacinth Lily.

Sayat'-Nova accepts it, as long as you slay him with your (own) hand.

I do not care about dying. I weep (only) for my kith-and-kin.'

There are good reasons for having quoted this poem in full. In the *Tetrak* the folio, although now with two unsightly ink blots in the left margin and repaired in the bottom right hand corner, bears in the bottom margin two skilfully executed ink drawings of a leaping panther and two male hounds facing each other and holding hands, probably originally, though the lower part of the folio has been trimmed (at least by the photographer), forming a zoomorph *Sê (U S)*. In the left margin and in the bottom right hand corner, in a Georgian hand that resembles that of Ivane Pentelant', the last scribe and compiler of the manuscript,⁶⁹ not that responsible for the text of the poem itself, there are scribal exercises reading *Saloman* and *Sult'an*. It certainly looks, therefore, as though the poem had attracted a certain attention. This impression is corroborated by the note added by Ioane to his version, if I have read it correctly (Ioane's cursive is very cursory), *ese diakh kargi simghera aris semashi itkinon*⁷⁰ This is a very good song. In the *seim* they will be hurt.' By *sema* Ioane, using a form of Russian *seim* 'parliament', must refer to the *mejlis* of the Georgian court, used because he is writing his manuscript for T'eimurazi Batonishvili in St. Petersburg. His middle form of the verb *tkená* 'to hurt' apparently refers to the impression the song will make on the courtiers. Had he used the active form *a-tkinon* 'they will hurt him (in the *mejlis*)', this would be a summary, such as he has made of others, of the intent of the song, namely that members of the court would cause the poet harm. But perhaps Ioane means that in 1823, when the heart-rending song is still sung, the members of what remained of the Georgian court would be pained by remorse for their former minstrel's sufferings. If so, a hope forlorn.

Can one take the tears of this song to be real (*im lali* 'I weep'), or are they merely glycerine? The ointments, herbs, and cures for his burning wound that he craves of doctors, his appeal to the legendary Loqmân, are surely purely theatrical. One must beware of reading Sayat'-Nova as

⁶⁹ See his colophon, *Tetrak* facsimile, p. 140.

⁷⁰ The third letter of this word looks more like a *Ბ* *v* than a *Ბ* *k*, but **itvinon*, if that is what is written, makes no sense.

though one were reading Molière, but there is a hint of comedy in the image of the lover sitting with broken bow and empty quiver, having loosed all his arrows at a rock (his mistress's heart), and shedding tears over the heap of sawdust (*t'egh* lit. 'heap of unwinnowed grain', Bedrossian), all that is left of them. And is there parody in the statement that his speech is not articulate (cf. Sappho's already quoted poem for the paralysing effect of passion on the tongue)⁷¹ like the words of the wise, which can be taken two ways, one of them not flattering to philosophers? And yet one knows that there were good reasons for Sayat'-Nova to feel 'like a governor appointed by the Shah' who had failed his master, and 'like one thrown out of his house', which he was indeed within a few months to be, looking 'for a place (to stay)' on the shores of the Caspian. With hindsight, admittedly a dangerous faculty, we can see good reasons for the paranoia expressed in this song, serious reasons to 'consider (the disorder of his) mind.' His image of the sunken monastery is revealing. Despite Debussy's tone poem *La Cathédrale Engloutie*, this is not a stock theme in international folklore, an integral part of Atlantis legends. In our own century churches and temples have disappeared under lakes (in our case artificial in pursuit of hydrological schemes), and Sayat'-Nova may be referring to an actual event. He uses it, however, as an image for grace forfeited as the result of the sin for which he weeps, which has led to an estrangement with his father confessor. We know that in 1759 his father-confessor, in the shape of his *modzghvari*, will be back to impose a most unpalatable fate.⁷² He was justifiably worried about his *tz'igh* (*tz'egh* 'tribe, caste, race, branch', Bedrossian), which we have translated as 'kith and kin', since it must be for his family that he fears rather than for the Armenian nation. Life for the wife and children of a married priest exiled to the watery fringes of Georgia was to be no bed of roses. The song may or may not have been composed with serious intent. But it is rich in premonition.

The final quatrain underlines the power of life and death possessed by the person to whom it is addressed, or purports to be addressed,

⁷¹ ὥς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὥς με φώναι- | σ' οὐδ' ἔν' ἔτ' εἴκει, || ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲν γλῶσσαις | μ' ἔλαγε ... 'When I see you but for a moment, then / The power to speak another word leaves me', fr. 31, ed. D.A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*, Loeb Classical Library, 1982, vol. I, pp. 78-80.

⁷² *Ese khvedri ch'emis modzghvris ari* 'This fate is from my confessor', *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, st. 3, v. 5, B p. 24.

including the ability to harm the poet's entire *gens*. The first verse calls this person variously prince, lord of the manor, Sultan and Khan. These are titles by which a swain could traditionally ennoble his mistress. However, they are without doubt ambiguous, and it could be that Sayat'-Nova owed his downfall to this ambiguity. For such was his manifest devotion, averred in many poems, to Irakli II, that the suspicion arises, and must have arisen then, that many of his love-songs may have been addressed to the King. The Armenian ode *Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak* 'May ye know that one year produced me and my beloved friend' (*Tetrak*, p. 127), recited in 1759, the poet's last year at court, could be addressed to Irakli⁷³: P *yâr* can, as well as 'mistress', mean a male friend (cf. *yâr-i ghar* 'friend of the cave', i.e. Abu Bakr, who hid with Muḥammad in a cave prior to their flight to Medīna, S). The poem describes the physical and mental effects of love in the manner of Sappho's Lesbian ode, and nowhere refers to the female properties conspicuous in many of his songs. The epicene nature of Sayat'-Nova's Beloved has been strongly stressed by Sergo Parajanyan in his remarkable film *Nĕran guynĕ* ('The colour of pomegranates') devoted to Sayat'-Nova, in which the figure of both Mistress and King is portrayed by the ethereal beauty of the Georgian actress Sop'iko Ch'iaureli.⁷⁴ Without intending to pass any moral judgment, one might well credit Parajanyan with special insight into such a matter, for he was known to be himself homosexual, in which respect, in the world of art, he is not alone (though luckily all were not subjected to the brutal Soviet system that imprisoned him). It is not unknown for fathers of three children, as was Sayat'-Nova, or husbands of four wives, as was Irakli, to be in fact bisexual. There is, however, nowhere the slightest indication that the Georgian King was affected in this way: 'Moi en Europe, et en Asie l'invincible Hercule', said Frederick the Great, but this does not refer to the Prussian monarch's sexual inclinations. The poet's character will not admit positive assertions. Sayat'-Nova's verse portrays him as a prey to emotion, expressing itself, as in the poem, in floods of tears. This feminine trait may be artificially assumed, purely conventional, as with the male actor who plays the *zenne* in the Turkish theatre: but it could lead to the acquisition of an unjustified reputation. And therein, perhaps, lies

⁷³ See above, p. 18, n. 62, p. 115.

⁷⁴ C.D., 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol 2 (1988), p. 25.

the key to the mystery. It was a tradition in Arabic poetry for the female beloved to be addressed with masculine nouns, pronouns, and verbal forms as though she were a man. This tradition was adopted by the Persians and the Turks, as far as their lack of grammatical gender would allow. Sayat'-Nova, who set great store by the 'Iranian ways' he brought to the Georgian king,⁷⁵ may have followed suit. This may have been one of the Persian ways that did not find favour. Queen T'amara may have been called 'King T'amara' (*T'amar mep'e*), but this was less striking in that *mep'e* means basically 'ruler', and Georgian knows no way of forming a feminine of this word, although it has a compound containing the word for 'woman' (*deda*) that unambiguously means 'queen' (*dedop'ali* 'woman ruler') for those who were not, as was T'amara, and she is alone in this in Georgian history, supreme ruler, her two successive husbands being royal consorts. But in Caucasian literature there was no tradition insisting that the beloved should be addressed as a man. The heroines of the Georgian epics *The man in the panther-skin* and *Vis and Ramin* are lovingly described as female, and the companions of Armenia's earliest love-poet, K'uch'ak Nahapet, are most explicitly so. In the middle of the 18th century, into the Georgian court comes a minstrel who sings passionate love-songs to someone he calls prince, sultan, and king. He means this as conventional praise of a mistress who may have no existence outside his imagination. But a poet does not dwell in his mind alone: his words may not be interpreted by his audience as he intends, and to compound the confusion, his audience knows that with this particular poet they have to be prepared to use their ingenuity in solving multiple double-entendres. The suspicion could well arise in these circumstances that when Sayat'-Nova protested his love for the Sultan and Khan, he meant one he had lauded before, Irakli II. Given the satirical bent of the members of the Georgian court that we have already noted, this could have been a great embarrassment for the Georgian king. He himself might know full well that the poet's words were innocent of any physical passion. But 'l'Enfer, c'est les autres', says Sartre. One way of asserting one's honour (for one can be sure that 18th-century Georgia was less permissive than our own society), and ridding oneself of embarrassment, was to rid oneself of the troublesome minstrel, who

⁷⁵ *geakhlebi eranelt'a tsesit'a*, in *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, st. 2 v. 3, I fol. 9, B p. 21.

had in any case proved somewhat too importunate with his claims for patronage, and caused such divisions, whosoever the fault may have been, among his courtiers.

It is not easy to determine the true character of a poet from his poems. Much depends upon the degree of equanimity, of goodwill or malice, in the eye of the beholder. Many of his contemporaries held Baudelaire to be effeminate because his poems revealed a fondness for cats. At the upper end of the tolerance scale, few are the Shakespeare scholars who suspect that a poet who in many sonnets declares his love for and extols the beauty of his 'fair friend' (*Sonnet* 104), and says 'Two loves I have ... a man right fair ... a woman colour'd ill' (*Sonnet* 144) could have any homosexual, bisexual, tendencies, and A.E. Rowse is *almost surely* right in saying that 'love' in the Elizabethan sense can mean 'friendship', and that if there were any homosexual attachment on the part of the poet for his sponsor Southampton, he would not have so publicly proclaimed it.⁷⁶ Much the same may be said for Sayat'-Nova's admiration of his sponsor Irakli II. But much depends on the construction put upon his words by his contemporaries, and 18th century Georgia might well differ from Elizabethan England in this regard. All in all, however, there are few grounds for thinking that Sayat'-Nova had any actual physical attachment for the Georgian king, however his words may have been interpreted, however embarrassing they may have been for Irakli: Sayat'-Nova, one feels, had enough troubles without that.

The most famous song of 1758 is *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a word to say, a request to make'⁷⁷ is a favourite with singers of the present day. It is linked in the *Tetrak* with *Vuntz'or vur gharib bēlbulēn me tarov baghin karot ē* 'Since the wandering Nightingale has been missing from the garden for one year' in that it is annotated as being in the same mode (*im hangshi*) as the latter (*Diba u iengiduni(a)*), which immediately precedes it.⁷⁸ A further connection is its apparent concern with chronology:

Me khosk unim ilt'imazov, angach ara, ach'ki lus.
Sērtumēs int'izar unim, k'u tisēn barov, ach'ki lus.
Ajab k'iz inch' get' im ari, kenum is khērov, ach'ki lus.
Ashkhars ashkharov kēshtatz'av, is k'izanit' sov, ach'ki lus.

⁷⁶ *Shakespeare's self-portrait*, University Press of America: Lanham, 1985, pp. 72, 78.

⁷⁷ T p. 121-2; I fol. 67A, from which only a few variant readings are of sufficient significance to be mentioned here); H p. 46. The song figures, as the only 1758 song, among the top seven of Hasrat'yan's league (p. xx).

⁷⁸ T p. 120.

*Makam*⁷⁹ och'ov yar ch'ê siri, ên inch' ari, ês inch' ban a.
 Êshkhemet junun im êli, man im gali yana-yana.
 Ês dardên och'ov ch'i k'ashê,⁸⁰ vur me dangin ch'i dimana.
 Sirtês luri pês khorvetz'ir êshkhit kërakov, ach'ki lus.

Dostirês dushman shinetz'ir, yaderun inch'pês dost anim.
Antz'katz'ats ôrên ch'im tesnum, k'ani guzê vur qast anim.
Astvadz vëka, khist dëzhar ê, gëlukhës inch'pês dus tanim.
Is me p'uk'ër navi nëman, k'u êshkhën tsov, ach'ki lus.

*Guzim beranës batz' anim, govk'ët anim t'arip'i pês.*⁸¹
*Tas tarov*⁸² man im galis p'adishahi sharip'i pês.
Okhtën tari êl man gu k'am sazën dziris qaribi pês.
But'a Shahsanamës dun is, êl ch'unim och'ov, ach'ki lus.

T'eguz hazar dard unenam, is sërtumës ah ch'im asi.
Im huk'mi hek'imën dun is, is êl urish Shah ch'im asi.
Sayat'-Noven asatz', zalum, is ên mahin mah ch'im asi,
*Hench'ak' ili*⁸³ dun vëres las, mazët shagh talov, ach'ki lus.

'I have a word (to say), with a request. Hearken (to me), light of my eyes.
 In my heart I have hope. The sight of you is fair, light of my eyes.
 Have I caused you offence? You stand in confusion, light of my eyes.
 This world is full up with people. I am starved of you, light of my eyes.

Did no-one ever love his beloved? What have I done, what (possible) thing?

I have gone mad through love of your, I wander about, all burnt up.
 No-one else will suffer such agony, will not encounter a ha'porth (of what I go through).
 You have roasted my heart like a quail in the fire of your love, light of my eyes.

You have turned my friends into enemies. How shall I make friends of strangers?

I do not see the passing day, whatever effort I may make.
 God is my witness, it is (all) very difficult. How shall get my head (above water)?

I am like a little bark, your love is an ocean, light of my eyes.

I want to open my mouth and sing you a paean of praise.⁸⁴
 For ten years I have gone around like a noble of the King.

⁷⁹ I *magar* (Georgian, 'indeed'); T adds *el*, rightly omitted by Hasrat'yan as giving an unacceptable hemistich of nine syllables.

⁸⁰ T; I *ch'kashe*, H *chë k'ashe*.

⁸¹ I omits this stanza.

⁸² T; H *tari*.

⁸³ T; I (*ê*)*li*, H *êli*.

⁸⁴ The original is also tautological: 'may I make your praise as *t'arip'* (APTaz *ta'rîf* 'making known, praise, tariff' (S), *tâ'rîf elâmâk* 'to praise' (Ä)).

For seven years also I have come, saz in hand, like the wandering-Qarīb.
You are my idol Shâhşanam,⁸⁵ I have no other, light of my eyes.

Though I suffer a thousand woes, in my heart I shall utter no (cry of) Alas!
You are (the dispenser of) wise rule for me, I shall call no other King.

Sayat'-Nova has said, 'Cruel one, I shall not call death death

As long as you weep over me, letting down your hair, light of my eyes.'

This poem is the very quintessence of Sayat'-Nova's love songs. It is full of striking images — the world swarming with people, yet lacking the one for whom he hungers; his little bark, like Shakespeare's, tossed on the broad ocean of his mistress's love; the romantic death, the hair of his (finally) broken-hearted beloved falling about his face, as in a scene from an Italian opera. It is full of passion: he is mad with love, wanders aimlessly about, oblivious of whether it is day or night, his heart roasted to a cinder. After all this, however, and though he suffer a thousand more such agonies, no word of complaint will pass his lips! No-one else will he call Shâh. There can be no ambiguity here, however. The beloved is undoubtedly female, Shâh-sanam to his Qarīb. Is there any reality underlying this protestation of undying love made in this ominous year 1758? The beloved is said to have turned his friends into enemies. This could well apply to erstwhile friends at court who disapproved of his liaison, if there was one, friends or relations of his beloved, even, as the coming disaster of the following year forces us to conjecture, his sponsor, the King himself. The figures he gives concerning his career seem very explicit: ten years in the livery of the Georgian court, seven years attendance upon the beloved, saz in hand, thus as a minstrel. This would place the beginning of his office at court at 1748, the serenading of his beloved in particular in 1751. In Chapter One we have tried, virtually in vain, to sort out the exact connection of Sayat'-Nova with the Georgian court. It may be that by 1748 he had to some extent modified his allegiance to the Crown Prince Giorgi and entered into the service of his father Irakli at T'elavi, whom he considered his sole ruler, as court minstrel.⁸⁶ In 1751, according to the annotation by Ioane to the Georgian poem *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs varskvlavis skhivi* 'How shall the ray from a star dry up the sea', Sayat'-Nova 'incurred the enmity of a senseless fellow',⁸⁷ but it would be rash to relate this to the beginning of the poet's

⁸⁵ APT *şanam* 'idol, a beloved object, a mistress' (S), Muslim symbol for feminine beauty and fidelity in the 'Âshiq Qarīb story.

⁸⁶ See Chapter One, pp. 14, 21.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 20.

claimed affair. Sayat'-Nova was susceptible to the spell of numbers. He liked to count the (notional) number of his beloved's moles, seventeen or seventy, as we have seen; he found in her the full complement of physical elements, 366 in number;⁸⁸ seven years after his exile from the court, as a priest and scribe at Kakhi, he will indulge in calendrical computations.⁸⁹ Can one place any trust in the figures 'ten' and 'seven'? They are conveniently metrically short: *tasnëch'ors* 'fourteen', for example, might be too long for the verse. Then, ten is too round, and seven too mystic, to inspire confidence. But even if the figures are perfectly accurate, there is not much that one can do with them in sorting out the poet's baffling chronology.

The 1758 poem *Ari hamov quluq ara* 'Come and gladly give ear', which is of a didactic nature, will be discussed below with similar Azeri poems. The four remaining Armenian songs dated 1758 are accompanied in the *Tetrak* with an indication of the month, three of them with the day of the month, according to the Julian calendar then still used in the Caucasus, to which one would 'add' 11 days to convert to Gregorian, when they were performed. It is not difficult to sense a progression in the intensity of feelings of distress: one can but hope it is not purely imaginary.

A rival and an enemy is (are) mentioned in the song dated 10th May 1758, beginning *Khëmetz'ur dzerit t'asemen* 'Give (me) to drink of the cup in your hand'.⁹⁰ It is in a melodious and intricately rhymed form which the poet describes as a *taslib* (APT *taşlib* 'chiastic'), and though it gives the impression of being a light piece, it contains strong sentiments, including a reference to the first (Biblical) murder:

*Gozal, Astvadz k'izi lav ta,
Ch'uzoghi ach'k'erun tz'av ta,
Angali khoskin mi avta ...*

⁸⁸ *Irek' harur vatz'un u vitz' amen andamët qarari* 'All your members constitute 366', the number of blood vessels in the human body according to Eastern physiologists as represented by Hasrat'yan, pp. 243-244, note to (Arm.) no. 30, *Vuntz'or vur qarib bëlbülën me tarov baghin karot ê* 'Since the wandering Nightingale has been absent from the garden for one year', of 1758. This number of 'members' is near the 365 days in 'one year'; one fears for one's sanity in pointing it out, but 1757 and 1758 were not leap years.

⁸⁹ Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, Kakho Caravanserai, 1215 Arm. (A.D. 1766/7), colophon reproduced in the Erevan facsimile, p. (143).

⁹⁰ It is not in I or T, but was found by Akhverdyan written 'on a torn, worn folio' (Hasrat'yan, p. 244, note to (Arm.) no. 32). The text has been edited and supplented by Akhverdyan, G. Lewonyan, and Hasrat'yan, and so, with respect, must be treated with caution.

Ov k'izi ayan mētik ta
Abelin Kayan mētik ta
Inch' ach'k k'iz khayan mētik ta ...

Ovor indz shinitz' divana,
Surb Karapitēn khivana.
Vadi eresēn sivana ...

Êshkhemet khēmats mast êkats,
Gēlukhēs mahin řast êkats,
*Sayat'-Noven *imast⁹¹ êkats...*

'Beauteous one, God prosper you.
 May he inflict pain on the eyes of the ill-wisher.
 Do not believe the word of an intriguer (*Az ängäl, ängälli*).

Who would clearly (*P âyân*) contemplate you,
 Let him think of Abel and Cain,
 Let him think what deceptive⁹² eyes you have.

Him who drove me insane
 May the Holy Precursor make mad (too).
 May the face of the enemy⁹³ turn black!

Intoxicated having drunk of your love,
 My head is prepared for death.
 Sayat'-Nova is now grown wise ...'

There is nothing in this song of the month of May that can strongly persuade one to take it seriously. A song performed in the following month, June 1758, however, in comprising sentiments that are paralleled in poems of undoubted serious intent, must be interpreted as referring to real difficulties incurred by the poet. It begins with a complaint that might well be just as literary exercise in the tradition of the many *plaintes* lamenting unrequited love:

Êndur ach'kēs ch'ê tz'amak'um, sērtis mech'ēn arin mēnatz'.
Vunch'ich' darov ch'i lavatz'av, mēhlamēs hid yarin mēnatz'.
Êshkhemēn hivand pařketz'a, ach'kēs chanaparin mēnatz'.
T'(a) miřa, izhum ti(s) êkav, nazēn beighrarin mēnatz'.

⁹¹ Amended from H's *im tist* which, whatever it is supposed to mean, cannot possibly have been intended by a skilled rhymester as Sayat'-Nova is, and shows himself to be all through the rest of the poem, as a 'rhyme' for *mast* and *řast*.

⁹² *khayan*, a form not existing in APT other than as part of *khiyânat* 'treachery, deceit', the adjective/agent noun being *khâ'in* or *khawwân*.

⁹³ *vadi*, hardly the genitive of APT *wadd* 'lover', or APT *wa'd* 'digging a grave', so better amended to the more usual *yad-*, T.Az. *yad* 'other, foreign, stranger', used elsewhere by S.-N. in the sense of 'rival, enemy'. An abbreviation such as *v (y)ad-i* 'and of a stranger/enemy' is not otherwise attested in S.-N.

*Garunk'nyan vakhtēn litz'vil ē. Ērani dziz, tsaghkats varir.
T'e bēlbulin baghēn ghērgetz'ik', manishakov lik'ēn sarir.
Bas inch'i dzerēn ch'ē galis, salb u ch'inar, et inch' arir.
Chukhkēt bēlbulin ēspanitz', karmir vart'ēn kharin mēnatz'.*

*Al puchpuchen asatz', khap'e sarumēn qarib bēlbulin.
Ip' bēlbulēn mitēn atsav řehnov kapats t'a(y)igulin.
Ov vagh gēnatz', vart'ēn k'aghitz', ch'asin t'e petk ē bēlbulin.
Vay k'u darin, qarib bēlbul, vur leshēt ch'ap'arin mēnatz'.⁹⁴*

'While my eye is never dry, in my heart the blood has ceased to flow.
Nothing is improved by any remedy. My handkerchief (alone) remains on
my wound.
Sick with love I laid me down, my eye fixed on the road.
She waited till I had died, then she come to see. Her charms lacked con-
stancy.

The time of Spring is fulfilled. Blessings upon you flowering fields.
If you have sent the Nightingale to the garden, the hills are (still) full of
violets.

Why does he not come into the hand, cypress and plaitain, what is it that
you have done?

Your luxuriance has killed the Nightingale. The red Rose remained
(enclosed) in her thorns.

The crimson tulip said, Confine the wandering Nightingale to the mountains,
While the Nightingale himself reflected on the bouquet-of-flowers wrapped
in sweet-basil.

Whoever has gone early and picked the Rose, let none say it must have
been the Nightingale.

Alas for your misfortune, wandering Nightingale, that your corpse remains
on the garden-fence!'

The first verse of the second stanza confirms that this is a song of early summer. The fourth stanza is full of conventional praise of the beloved's sweet tongue and purple dress, while he who accepts sherbet from her hand will come to no harm. There is much in the first three stanzas that is conventional. 'She waited until I had died, then she came to see me', with its preterite tenses, seems like a quotation from some Barbara Allen-type Turkish ballad. One would perhaps never imagine that there was any reality behind the crimson tulip (the poet uses the Georgian word *puchpucha* which may or may not be significant)⁹⁵

⁹⁴ T p. 128, H (with emendations), p. 49.

⁹⁵ P *puchpucha*^h is listed by Steingass in the sense of 'anything whispered about', obviously, if the word has a real existence, an onomatopoeia; whether S.-N. knew it and could base a pun on it is conjectural.

asking that the Nightingale be kept at a distance, or that someone might have plucked the Rose and the Nightingale get the blame for it,⁹⁶ were it not for the sentiments of the final stanza:

*Ashughi lizun bělbul ê, ornank' unê, nalat' ch'ě-ka.
Shahi mod khoskěn a(n)tz' ku kena, ěspanelu jalat' ch'ě-ka.
Hek'im u dadastan ch'ě-ka, me d(o)rust adalat' ch'ě-ka.
Me mart' ch'ě-ka, azatil êr, Sayat'-Noven darin mēnatz'.*

'The minstrel's tongue is a Nightingale, it bears a blessing, there is no curse (in it).

At the (court of the) King the word passes round, is there no executioner to kill it?

There is no judge, no court of law, no honest justice.

There is no man but he has gone free. Sayat'-Nova remains (alone) in his dire-plight.'

It is difficult to see how this stanza would fit into the merely conventional. It runs parallel to the Georgian complaint to the King, *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice', in which, as we have seen, the poet seeks to counter the slanders of his enemies at court. The Georgian poem is undated, and it is tempting to place it with this complaint of June 1758; on the other hand, Sayat'-Nova could well have been in hot water on several occasions throughout his career.

On 6th September 1758 Sayat'-Nova performed a song from which it might appear that the *jalat'* or executioner he had feared in his June song had materialised. Here, however, the word is used as a well-worn metaphor for a tormenting mistress:

*Ėshkhemet andanak êla, êk mort'e, jalat'ěn dun is.
Mi ěspani hasrat'emet, sěrtis khějalat'ěn dun is ...*⁹⁷

'I emerged (wounded) by love for you without a knife (being used). Come and slay me, you are the executioner!

Do not kill me through (my) longing for you. You are the shame in my heart...'

But the song is otherwise a series of run-of-the-mill flatteries, at the end of which the poet avers

⁹⁶ That is, if one has correctly interpreted the strange phrase *petk ê bělbulin* which one would normally take to mean '(Let none say) the Nightingale needs her (the Rose)', the ungallantry and indifference of which, though it might well be felt, would be an unthinkable sentiment to express in a love-song.

⁹⁷ T p. 126, H p. 54. Cf. Marcabru, *Amors es mout de mal avi; / Mil homes a mortz ses glavi; / Dieus non fetz tant fort gramavi* 'Love is of a detestable lineage; he has killed thousands of men without a sword. God has created no more terrible enchanter', Chaytor, H.J., *The Troubadours*, Cambridge U.P., 1912, p. 43.

Sayat'-Nova, vur k'iz unê, ashkharumës inch' gham unê

'As long as he has you, what trouble has Sayat'-Nova?'

which, although it can be taken ambiguously ('who needs (more) trouble who (already) has you?'), persuades no-one to take these sentiments seriously.

In the last dated Armenian song of 1758, that of 9th October, there are signs that Sayat'-Nova is preparing himself for a winter of discontent, a winter that was, in fact, to be his last as minstrel to the Georgian court. For the *dushman*, the enemy, though defied, is back:

*Yar, k'iz iski zaval*⁹⁸ *ch'êli, k'u dushmënin shař batz'arats*⁹⁹

'Beloved, may you come to no real harm (from) the evil expressed by the enemy.'

After this ominous first verse, however, the song proceeds immediately to praise the physical beauty of the beloved, her perfume that captures the whole world, her slim waist, her fingers as white as parchment, her tongue like a golden pen. She is like a gilded Book of Hours retailing a homily (*T'ëghtirët oskê varaqov Asmavur is, chař batz'arats*), in one of the better images. The song ends with praise of her three score and ten moles, each one paralleled by a verse of her admiring poet, one of Sayat'-Nova's most excruciatingly artificial conceits. The first verse, therefore, even if it were a merely conventional defiance of the *lausengier*, is out of place in such a setting. Ioane knows nothing of it in his 1823 manuscript. It is, however, clearly there in the *Tetrak*, and the complex *radîf* rhyme scheme (*shař/tsař/chař/patsař/patchař/vař/jař/bař batz'arac*) shows that it belongs to the poem. One cannot expect Ioane to register all the details of songs his father composed sixty odd years previously, before he was born (ca. 1765?).¹⁰⁰ The *Tetrak* was written over an unknown period of years to 1765, but there is no reason to think Sayat'-Nova or another altered the original text to include the above verse. Probably this was omitted, as incongruous, in popular performances by later singers, and it was such a version that Ioane heard and recorded. Incongruous or not, the verse must be taken as genuine, as also, one suspects, the 'enemy' behind it.

⁹⁸ APT *zavâl* 'declining' S, 'adversity' R, Az *zaval* 'misfortune' Ä.

⁹⁹ T p. 125, H p. 55; I fol. 64A as v. 4 *och'ov qimat'(ë)t' ch'i gidi, javahiris k'ar* [-ar is required] *batz'aratz'* 'No-one knows your worth (as) a gem-stone expressed' (cf. p. 280).

¹⁰⁰ See above, Chapter One, p. 29.

At the end of the 1758 song which is without indication of month, *Angin akēn vēret sharats* 'Priceless gems are ranged upon you', in which God is called upon to preserve 'you and him with whom you are *nēvakht*', which may be intended as a Persian neologism for 'timeless', and the beloved is compared to the Peacock Throne inherited from Chosroes, there is an annotation in Georgian, which may be in the poet's own hand, preceded by the (admittedly usual) *K'* for 'By Christ's divinity', which reads, 'May God forgive Arut'in Sayat'-Nova, slain by his beloved, chronicon 446'.¹⁰¹ The appeal to God (v. 2) in a romantic love-poem is one thing: a prayer in Georgian, which, if not serious, could be considered as taking the name of the Lord in vain, is another, and clamours to be taken seriously.

When in deepest trouble, some men turn to psalms, and perhaps Sayat'-Nova's complaints to God, and his beloved, are in that category. Other men, like Ecclesiastes, concluding that all is vanity, indulge in wise saws and proverbs. Whatever the predicament was in which Sayat'-Nova found himself in his final two years at the Georgian court, he, though clearly stricken, did not take it lying down. 1758 was for him a year rich in *öyüdlämä* or offers of advice to others.¹⁰² Most of the Azeri poems of 1758 are of this nature. There is only one Armenian poem of this year in this genre, namely that beginning *Ari hamov qulugh ara, khalkhi nok'ar Sayat'-Nova*, 'Come and gladly give ear, servant of the people, Sayat'-Nova'.¹⁰³ Defiantly roturier in spirit, it is rich in folk wisdom addressed ostensibly to himself, but publicly recited to, and directed at, others. 'Everyone cannot seize prey to his own profit' (*Amen mart' ch'i kana changi shahov shēk'ar, Sayat'-Nova*) is a warning to his enemies that they will find him no easy catch. Like a true Christian, however, he will turn the other cheek: 'To him who presents you with gall, give him sugar, Sayat'-Nova. The cruel club has no effect: read the beautiful Lives of the Fathers' (*Ov k'izi lighi park'eve, dun tu shak'ar,*

¹⁰¹ *K' ghmert'man sheundos yarisagan mokluli arut'ina saiat'nova k'k. UMV*, T p. 123; I fol. 65A, notes only that the poem is a *mukhammas*. Hasrat'yan, p. 50, interprets *nēvakht* improbably as 'caressed' (*ggvel, p'ayp'ayvel*), on what authority is unknown; formally, the nearest Armenian word is *nuat* (*nēvagh*) 'languid, faint, pining away' (Bedrossian), which does not rhyme.

¹⁰² The *ensenhamens* of the troubadours, the *mukaffar* of the Arabs.

¹⁰³ T p. 135, H p. 53; I fol. 71, who omits stanzas 3 and 5, has several variants, mainly unimportant. He prefaces the poem with a note in Georgian calling it an 'alternative (*magieri*) poem to the K'amanch'a', repeating this surely mistaken description in another such note at the end.

Sayat'-Nova.¹⁰⁴ / *Anbari gurdzēn korats ê, kart'a Harantz' Vark'ēn sirun*). A man must remain on his guard, however: 'Make an effort, lest they break your glass,¹⁰⁵ lest they throw a stone, Sayat'-Nova' (*Qast ara, shushet ch'ē-kotrin, ch'ē-khēp'in k'ar, Sayat'-Nova*). Not that one can teach everybody: 'Though you supervise in school, the fool will not be admonished by corporal punishment' (*T'eguz dēbrastan pah tas, tsetsov ch'i khēratvi khivēn*); 'The plane will not shave crooked wood straight, carpenter¹⁰⁶ Sayat'-Nova' (*Tsurēn p'etēn ch'i dērēsti randa, durgar Sayat'-Nova*). Even the Gospel cannot help everyone: 'The words of the Gospel are pearls, its ordinances fair. Do not cast rubies and jewels before swine, Sayat'-Nova' (*Avitarani khoskirēn mark'arit ê, kark'ēn sirun. / Mi atsi khuzi arčh'ivēn lal u govhar, Sayat'-Nova*) The servant of the people has no time for the upstart: 'The lowborn will not become highborn, the negro cannot be bleached with lye' (*Bedasēli asēl ch'i dārna, t'olov ch'i siptaki sivēn*). Those content to remain lowly in this life will get their reward in Heaven: 'If you do not hanker after the glories of this life, you will be given the diamond of the life (to come). If, mindful of (the good of) your soul, you dress in rags, you will be given gold-embroidered satin. If you repent in tears, you will be given the part of the immortals' (*T'e ês kenatz' p'ark'ēn ch'uzis, ên kenatz' almasēn ku tan. / T'e hok'ut khat'ir shal hak'nis, zark'ashats atlasēn ku tan. / T'e vur lalov zēkhchum anis, anmahatz'ēn masēn ku tan*). Stressing that the minstrel performs a vital function in human affairs, Sayat'-Nova points to the comfort brought to mankind by music and poetry: 'Where there is a wedding, where there is a mourning, where there is a party, there is a song. Where there is a service, where there is a liturgy, where there is an

¹⁰⁴ Ioane reads *Hamasha ch'is karogh chari shahov shēk'ar, Saiat'nova*, presumably meant to mean 'You cannot always seize (*chari*, possibly for G *cher-a* 'hold, seize'?!) prey with profit, Sayat'-Nova', hardly acceptable.

¹⁰⁵ Az. *shūshā* 'glass, bottle' (Orudzhev). Cf. P. *shīsha^h dar jigar shikastan* 'to break a glass in the liver', i.e. 'render restless or unsteady' (Steingass). Cf. SN *az shesh-i nard-am* 'I am (spilled) from a phial of spikenard', *Qāfiya in four languages*, st. 1, v. 3, I fol. 22A, H p. 229. Hasrat'yan, Glossary, p. 306, correctly interprets the word here as a metaphor for 'heart', with which one might compare the modern colloquial English use of 'bottle' as 'courage, heart'.

¹⁰⁶ If one may read *randa durgar* as the Persian *izāfet* construction *randā-yi durgar*, the meaning would be 'the carpenter's plane (will not shave crooked wood straight)'. But it is possible that the poet meant to refer to himself as a sort of carpenter, as in the Azeri poem quoted below, *Rahmat' p'ir ustada, k'orp'i tik'ana*, he clearly implies an affinity between himself and the bridge-builder, being, after all, like him a 'servant of the people' (*khalkhi nok'ar*).

agapê, there is a hymn' (*Vur tigh harsnik', vur tighên suk', vur tigh soibat', khagh ê ělum. / Vur tigh zham, vur tigh patarak', vur tigh sirov, tagh ê ělum*). But the life of the spirit is hard: 'if you obey the wishes of your soul, your body is dissatisfied' (*T'e vur hok'ut kamk'n is anum, marmini bedamaq ê ělum*). And Sayat'-Nova does not hesitate to show himself particularly vulnerable in this respect: 'When you encounter one of the pangs (of love), you are carried away by the flood, Sayat'-Nova' (*Vur me dardin ku dimanas, dun jêratar, Sayat'-Nova*).

The spring and early summer of 1758 were very productive in Azeri songs. Of the seventeen so dated, eight were performed in March, two in April, four in May, one in June. Of them, two are dated on the same day, 19th March, and three on 10th June. Whether the date given in the *Tetrak* are the those of the composition of the songs, or the performance, or both, and whether they are in fact invariably accurate, we cannot know. The Georgian annotation to *Dilui dudi bulbul k'imi oteir* 'My tongue sings like the lip of the Nightingale' states that the poem was 'said by Arut'in and written on 19th March in the year 446 of the chronicon' [A.D. 1758],¹⁰⁷ which might well be interpreted as indicating that it was written and recited on the same day. In any case, early 1758 seems to have been a time of feverish activity on the part of Sayat'-Nova in the Azeri field. Although one cannot be sure, since Azeri was the *lingua franca* of the Caucasus and well understood at the Georgian court, it is possible that Sayat'-Nova performed his songs in this language in public, in and outside Tiflis and T'elavi, since, as we have said, it is not at all certain that the Georgian court had, or desired, a monopoly on his services. One is tempted to suspect that his 1758 Armenian poem lamenting the fact that 'the wandering Nightingale has been missing from the garden for one year', and that 'the serf misses his master'¹⁰⁸ may reflect an absence from the Georgian court due to his extra-mural Azeri activity. But there is nothing that will confirm such a suspicion, and the Nightingale's absence from the garden is a *lieu commun*.

The 1758 Azeri poems are mainly didactic *ogut'lama* (*öyüdlämä*) but there are four fairly conventional love-songs. *Dilui dudi bulbul k'imi*

¹⁰⁷ *ese qap'ia arut'inas nat'k'omi da itsera mart'is IT'. k'ks. UMZ, T p. 44. H p. 177, Azeri no. 39, wrongly gives the date as 10th March 1758. oteir could represent Az ömāk 'pass, overtake', i.e. 'surpass', but the sentiment would be untypically presumptuous; more probably, though one normally assumes Azeri usages in SN, it represents Western Turkish ömek 'sing', as interpreted above.*

¹⁰⁸ Above, p. 154.

oteir mentioned above, in which the poet, with quaint consideration, hopes that his song will not put the beloved's teeth on edge (*aghzunda duzilmish dish injinmasun*), complains as usual of a multitude of woes (*dardum ch'okh dur*) and begs his beloved to staunch his wounds (*tut' qanumi yaralarum sarindan*), ends with a word of encouragement to himself so to work that the soup will not be spoiled for want of bread and salt (*Banda Saiat'-Nova, san beila ch'alish / Nan namag dushmasun ash injinmasun*). But there are no signs of real distress in it, unless one takes seriously the statement in the first verse of the final quatrain, *p'iradan p'ir almisham olmisham t'alish* 'From the *p'ir* I have taken *p'ir*, I have turned into a Tâlish (infidel).' The expression *p'ir almisham* is unclear, but might either mean 'I have taken (myself the rank of) *p'ir*, or with G *p'ir-i* in its sense of 'emblem on the banner of a guild' (Tsch, also 'patron' < PT), i.e. he shows a dubious flag. *Tâlish* is the name of an Iranian people in Gilan. Hasrat'yan interprets the verse to mean that Sayat'-Nova says he has become an infidel, since the Tâlish 'seem in the 18th century to have been predominantly idolaters', drawing a parallel with the Armenian verse *Shat mart' k'u êshkhên ku da'na izid* 'Many a man for love of you will turn Yazîdî ("devil-worshipper")'.¹⁰⁹ But a true religious crisis would hardly be expressed in such artificial terms, and one must be justified in interpreting them as conventional hyperbole.

Two love-songs are bracketed under the date of 10th June 1758 in the *Tetrak*. *Ikhilur k'ovlum shaharin nazlu iarum gezmeinja* 'My heart is demolished if my gracious beloved does not walk forth' is a light-hearted invitation to a beauty to show herself, in which the allegedly love-sick, distracted poet (*êshkhundan mastam, uimanam* 'I am sick for love of you, I do not conform') is not so far gone that he cannot apply some moral blackmail in the final stanza:¹¹⁰

Zilp'un baghrum khach'ilmaz.
gulun gogsum sach'ilmaz.
Iar, sanun k'ep'un ach'ilmaz,
ai gozum
Saiat'nova suzmeinja,
suzmeinja, suzmeinja.

'Your lovelock will not penetrate my heart,
 Your rose will not entangle my breast,
 Your joyfulness will not open up,

¹⁰⁹ H p. 240, note to Arm. no. 17, *Dun ên hurin is*, T p. 112, H p. 29, st. 2, v. 1.

¹¹⁰ T p. 82, top; Arasli, pp. 24-25; H p. 183 (translation very approximate).

O (apple of) my eye,
 If you glide not past Sayat'-Nova,
 If you glide not past, glide not past.'

Bu eshkh p'irumdan verilmish / iandum dushtum arasina 'This love was given by my master (*pîr*), I have fallen in and burned'¹¹¹ is full of protestations (*such'lu isam qan veruram* 'If I be at fault, I shall pay with blood') and complaints of deprivation, perhaps by a rival (*bulbu(l)am gulum sat'ilmish* 'I am the Nightingale, my Rose has been sold') that would have a better chance of being believed were it not for the first verse, which asserts that his master is responsible for the theme of his poem, whether as a set exercise or because he has cast him into a sentimentally dangerous profession is unclear. The marginal note in the *Tetrak* linking the two songs states that they are both *mejlisis rovani t'aslibi* (sung) in one (and the same) mode (*ert'i khazshi*) by Arut'in on 10th June 446 of the chronicon'.¹¹² The term *rovani t'aslibi* is a metrical technical term.¹¹³ *mejlisis* 'of the *mejlis*' may belong to it, somewhat in the sense of 'performable in the assembly, official', cf. the colloquial meaning of P *majlis* as 'an act of a play' (Steingass). '(Performed) at the assembly' would require the dative/locative *majliss(a)*, but in any case the implication is that these Azeri songs were sung by Sayat'-Nova, or were intended to be sung, at the Georgian court.

The remaining Azeri love-song of 1758, *Dedum, Yar, dardua doza-bilmanam* 'I said, Beloved, I cannot stand my suffering', which in the *Tetrak* directly follows the last two mentioned, which might mean they were felt to form a group, bears no indication of the month or day on which it was composed or performed, but it is possibly one of the most important sources of biographical information, hitherto unsuspected, of Sayat'-Nova's works, ranking with the revealing Armenian and Georgian poems of this final stage in the poet's career. Its numerous word-plays around the syllable *ani*, arguably concealing and disclosing the name of a lady responsible for his disgrace in 1759, have been discussed above in Chapter Three, where the poem is quoted in full.¹¹⁴ The

¹¹¹ T pp. 82 bottom - 83 top; H p. 182.

¹¹² T p. 82, length of left margin.

¹¹³ *rovani* does not appear to reflect PT *rawânî* 'course, effusion', but rather APT *rawî* 'the last letter of a distich in which all the verses in the same poem terminate' (S), which does not, however, describe this poem. *t'aslibi*- (APT *taslib*) 'chiastic form' is also used inaccurately.

¹¹⁴ Above, pp. 101-105.

suffering of which the poet complains, though it did not affect his technical mastery, of a high order in this poem, was possibly very real.

All the other Azeri poems dated 1758 are didactic. They display various forms of pessimism or dissatisfaction with the human condition which have no explicit connection with the trials of the lover. The lighter of the two such poems recited on 19th March, although it would appear to be a typical *öğütlämä*, is named in the annotations both in the *Tetrak* and Ioane's manuscript as a *t'ejnis* or allegory, which ought to mean that it is not to be taken at face value. The calumniator is back again, with sound Christian advice on how to deal with him, namely turn the other cheek, while at the same time making sure one's conscience is clear. It begins

*K'ovul, har k'im sanun yamanun desun,
qait' ona soilaginan, jan adam.
t'ak'san aru olsan, yamanun desun.
san ozun yakhshilugh qazan, jan adam.*¹¹⁵

'Heart, let anyone who will tell of your defects.
Turn and say to him, "(So is) the soul of man" ["such is life"?].¹¹⁶
As long as you yourself are clean, let him tell of your defects
(So) win virtue for yourself. (So) is the soul of man.'

He is convinced of the soundness of these words of wisdom, among which one should not pick and choose:

¹¹⁵ T p. 55, the first word by a *lapsus calami* reading *k'ovulul*; the Georgian annotation at the end reads *ese t'ejnisi arut'in asats ê ëduglama (for ëgudlama) zanjilama* 'This allegorical poem was recited by Arut'in; it was written on 19th March 446 of the chronicon'; I fol. 27; H p. 178. The page in T has interesting features. It is headed in Armenian notary script *ês arut'i(n) asats ê ëduglama* (for *ëgudlama*) *zanjilama* 'This *öğütlämä zanjilama* (didactic concatenation) was said by Arut'in', followed by the number *ts.g.* '53'. This introduces the first five lines, in Armenian bolorgir script, of the Azeri poem, contained in full in I fol. 24A, beginning *Deria olmish êshkhum. ch'alkhêir novum. sanay ghurban ôzum* 'My love has become an ocean, my boat is tossed about, my soul is a sacrifice unto thee'. The above poem follows on in Georgian script. In the right margin, in a more elegant hand, someone has written, presumably as a writing exercise in Georgian script, *ese tsig [space] moskavsh gemin vur*, possibly 'this book (*tsig(ni)*) ... in Moscow (*Moskovsh(i)?*) the ship (Tk.G. *gemi* with the Armenian definite article?) which (Tilfis Arm. *vur*)'; the *gemi-* may relate to the *nov* (P. *nâv*) of the Armeno-Azeri fragment. In the lower margin, in an Armenian hand more elegant than that at the head of the page, someone has written, doubtless likewise as a writing exercise, *p'ah p'ah na ajab shok'ri khoda*, gibberish in a mixture of Armenian and Persian which might 'mean' 'well, well, no, how strange, thank God'. These are of interest only as being possibly scribbles by the poet's children, not yet much influenced by the Fifth Commandment.

¹¹⁶ This translation is a guess. The expression is in some way connected with the Persian expression *jân-i âdam* 'soul of man', figuratively used as 'something rare and wonderful' (S).

*Gal, gulagh as bu beit'um, al da var,
Demaginan, yashil da var, al da var.*

'Come, lend an ear, take this verse of mine and pass it on,
Not saying, There is green here, and scarlet there.¹¹⁷

Here puns are made on *al* 'take!' and 'scarlet', and *var* 'give!' (Az. *ver*) and 'there is' (Az. *var*), which, as in Shakespeare, neither augment nor diminish the earnestness of the occasion. Like the pun on *adam* 'Man' and *Adam* 'Adam':

*Gunah ozi talkh dur, shirin gorinur.
onu inch'un janat'dan ch'(ē)khti jan Adam.*

'The essence of sin is bitter, (though) it seem sweet.
For that the soul of Adam was thrown out of Paradise.'

The poet refers to friends and 'others', normally in his case enemies, and is determined to remain on good terms with both:

*Saiat'nova, ia bugundan ia dundun,
razi ol, gal, handamundan ia iadundun.
ajal gorushanda dushar iadundun.
istar iuzil ch'ak'tursan jan adam.*

'Sayat'-Nova, from today, if not yesterday,
Come, be reconciled with your friends, and others.
With Death in sight, this slips from your memory,
Even though for a hundred years you draw the breath of Man.'

The final sentiment, badly expressed, may be intended to mean that, though one draws breath for a hundred years, it is not until Death is near that one remembers to be reconciled with friend and foe.

The other Azeri poem of 19th March 1758, '(Lord) have mercy on the old master building a bridge',¹¹⁸ is of major importance, and an attempt at a critical edition of it is included below in the chapter on the poet's Azeri works.¹¹⁹ It is rich in significance regarding the decline in the author's fortunes. He is conscious of his rôle — for the bridge-builder

¹¹⁷ Green and red are used together as a symbol for variegated beauty, as in the epithalamium reproduced by Alishan, *Armenian popular songs*, Venice, 1852, p. 44-45. There is a natural parallel in medieval European troubadour song: *Prat me semblon vert e vermelh / aissi com el doutz tems de mai* 'The meadows seem to me all green and red / as in the sweet time of May', Bernart de Ventadorn, *cit.* Topsfield, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Here, however, the colours seem to symbolise direct opposites (as in terms of the spectrum they are), meaning that the poet's advice could appear something of a farrago.

¹¹⁸ T p. 43, I fol. 31A, H (Arm. tr.), p. 179.

¹¹⁹ Chapter Eleven, p. 426.

quickly speaks in the first person — of striving, despite all obstacles which have worn him down and will lead to his death, to build a bridge by means of his art between otherwise widely variant cultures (Armenian, Georgian, Azeri, Persian, even Russian):

‘(Lord have) mercy on the old master building a bridge.
The passer-by may lay a stone to his foundation.
I have sacrificed my soul, worn out my life, for the [multiracial] nation
[of Georgia?].
A brother may arrange a rock upon my grave.’

He refers specifically to an enemy, who may be supernatural, Satan, or more likely the author of the written spells, probably poison-pen letters, but whom, aided by a knowledge of right and wrong by his Lord, he will defy;

‘My Lord, for salvation is suffices (to tell) left from right [i.e. bad from good],
(This) preserving (us) from the binding-spell of [malicious] writings.
Therefore I shall not retreat before the enemy.’

The rôle of his trusted friend is expressed in ambiguous terms:

Sinama iaralar s(i)rdash duzeir

which may be translated, since the grammar is not standard, as if the equivalent of *Az sinämäki yaralari sirdash düzer*

‘The wounds to my breast will an intimate-friend allay.’

or, in line with the traditional abandonment of the hopeless lover by his friends and relations, as the equivalent of *sinämä yaralari sirdash düzer*, in fact closer to the text,

‘To my breast will an intimate friend lay on wounds.’

His main worry, which we two centuries later know to be unfounded, is that he is doomed to obscurity:

‘What sort of nightingale are you, who are never seen to fly
[var. whose voice is not seen].
Your love is denied, your charm [var. your saz] is never seen.
Sayat'-Nova, you slave, one sees nothing written by you.’

The final verse expresses the traditional fear of the minstrel that his career is at an end and that he will be replaced by another, by anyone, by the first to present himself:

‘The (first)-comer to pick up a pen may draw a picture’

— although, of course, it will not be superior to his, the fruit of a life-time of experience. A fuller commentary on this important poem and its implications for the career of Sayat'-Nova, will be given below.¹²⁰

Proverbs and other manifestations of popular wisdom which, it may be said, often contain more common-sense, and certainly more practical value, than learned treatises on philosophy, and the worth of which is recognised by poets of all ages, who in reciprocity themselves (e.g. Horace, Shakespeare) contribute to the general store, have been proposed as the basis for many Western troubadour songs.¹²¹ The *öyüdlämä* of Sayat'-Nova comprise proverbs, adaptations from fables, echoes from the Gospels, etc., as in that dated 6th April 1758, beginning

Naqadar k'i aslan t'ilkini basa
Gena ankhasinja,¹²² tut'atut' gerak...
Ahli olan qili qildan taramaz.
Nashi olan iaghshi iaman aramaz.¹²³

'Inasmuch as the Lion would fall upon the Fox,
 And that from behind, a special-grip is needed...
 One cannot snatch a hair from the head of a man of experience.
 The inexperienced man does not (know how to) look out for good and bad
 (opportunities)'

There is here doubtless an echo of *Matthew* 12,29 and *Mark* 3,27: 'How can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?' (*Matthew*, similarly *Mark*), although one cannot go so far as to credit Sayat'-Nova with introducing a new thought into Turkish consciousness.

The poet is clearly in a defensive, defiant mood. He means to be the Fox, and the traditionally royal attributes of the Lion may point to the King. Perhaps it is from this point in time that one may date the beginning of the crisis that leads directly to the poet's downfall, for this Azeri poem contains his darkest thoughts. He is suddenly beset by thoughts of illicit love and its consequences:

¹²⁰ Chapter Eleven, pp. 427-434.

¹²¹ Cf. A.P. Torres, *Antologia da poesia trovadoresca Galego-Portuguesa*, Porto, 1977, p. 12, quoting i.a. an article by A. Bell in *The Modern Languages Review*, vol. 27 (April 1932), pp. 175-185.

¹²² Dialectal for *arkha-*.

¹²³ T p. 53, Arasli, p. 35; Armenian translation, H p. 180. The Georgian annotation in T reads *K' ese ogut'lam(a) arut'inas nat'k'omi aprilis V k'ks U MV* '(In the name of) Christ, this *öyüdlämä* was recited by Arut'in on 6th April 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758)'.

*Gunahk'ar amalin t'aridan olur.
aqil bashtan gech'ar, iaridan olur.
asildan bedasil qaridan olur.*

'The acts of the sinner stem from his darkness.
Sense passes from his head, driven out by his love.
A man of good family becomes as one lowborn on account of a woman.'

An obscure physiological passage, in which rubies symbolise blood and jewels semen, a dangerous preoccupation for sick minds, appears, following the teaching of the Church, to prescribe abstinence outside procreation, and to warn of the fate in store for the child born out of wedlock:

*T'a k'ech'masun ol lamak'an badana
istar donsun iaqut' gavar madana.
iad oghuli ialan sevar iadana.
gobagindan gobagina lut'gerak'.*

'Until the infinite¹²⁴ passes into the body
The rubies (and) jewels wish to return to the mine.
The false¹²⁵ mother will not-truly love her illegitimate son.
From generation to generation¹²⁶ he will needs go naked.'

The proverbs in Armenian and other Near Eastern languages regarding the illegitimate child (the P *ḥarâm-zâdeh* as distinct from the *ḥalâl-zâdeh*) are legion. But they usually point to his untrustworthiness, danger for the legitimate heirs, and general bad character, attitudes on the part of the population that are responsible for his lamentable fate, rather than this lamentable fate itself, for which Sayat'-Nova here expresses concern. There is no reason to suppose that the poet himself was in such a position.

But family matters are much on his mind. Less than a month later, on 6th May, the poet, as we shall see, will complain of being fatherless. In the present poem he laments his separation from mother and brother, which rings pathetically true, even if it was mainly his precocious talent that had cut him off from his relations:

¹²⁴ *lamak'an*, AT *lâ-makân* 'for which there is no place of being, the infinite space beyond all that is, the region of nothingness whence God calls existences into being' (R); see p. 60 n. b.

¹²⁵ *iad* (*yad*), lit. 'foreign, other'; cf. German *fremd gehen* 'to be unfaithful, commit adultery', and the Attic use of *yóthos*, generally 'bastard, baseborn son, i.e. one born of a slave or concubine' (though not without valour or leadership qualities, e.g. Medôn, *Iliad*, 2,727), as 'any child born of a foreign woman, or where one parent is not a citizen' (Liddell and Scott, 7th ed.).

¹²⁶ *Lit.* 'from navel to navel'; like T *göbek*, the Armenians use *port* 'navel' to signify 'generation' or degree of kinship separation.

*Man bilmanam ustuma k'im tuz et'ti,
Anadan qardashadan sar ialquz et'ti.
Har k'im Saiat'novan uzdanuz et'ti.*

'I do not know who threw salt over me,
Who separated me from mother and brother.
Everyone has made Sayat'-Nova a thing to be stared at.'

Then, finally, mystical thoughts of death:

Olur haq iolinda o nabut' gerak'

'It happens that along the road to God annihilation is necessary.'

The use of (*al-*) *Haqq*, basically 'Truth', for God, and the Persian *nâ-bûd* for 'non-existence' suggests that the thought is *ṣūfī*, with parallels in the Hindu *nirvâna*. But it is just as Christian, and Sayat'-Nova could have known it from *John* 12,24-25: 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' This is a sombre thought for the Nightingale. It suggests that the days of wine and roses are past, and life has not much more to offer.

The structurally light, melodious *dubeit* or poem in couplet form dated 6th May 1758 begins with a gracious nod to the minstrel's *pîr* or master:

*Dada olan sozi belu
p'irdan gelan p'armani dur.
sik'i hadidana ch'(ê)khmish,
qizil gumish sirmani dur.¹²⁷*

'A clear word from the master
who is one's grandfather,¹²⁸ is a command.
Tightly drawn through the iron guage,
it is a scarlet and silver string.'

But what begins as a traditionally happy and grateful eulogy of one's master immediately passes into a blacker mood. It is as though the pupil,

¹²⁷ T p. 62 (b), with the Georgian annotation, *K' ese arut'inas dubeit'i maisis V k'ks.* UMZ '(In the name of) Christ, this is a *dûbayt* of Arut'in, May 6th 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758). H p. 187, where the year is given, but without the day and the month.

¹²⁸ PT *dada*^h, Georg. *dada*, 'grandfather, old man', is used here by Sayat'-Nova in an exalted sense; elsewhere he applies it as an epithet for Solomon: *t'eguz mêtok' chartar ëli, kantz' Soghomon dada ëli* 'Though there might be one very clever, more of a *dada* than Solomon' (or possibly '... cleverer than Grandfather Solomon'), T fol. 122, H p. 50, line 13.

asked to compose a set piece on, say, spring in Armenia, had passed after the first merry notes to a lament for the victims of an earthquake. He who complains in the Georgian poem *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice' that he has no wife or parents-in-law, and in the Azeri poem just discussed that he is separated from mother and brother, now describes himself as fatherless:

*Babsiz bu jihan ich'inda,
gozi tolu qan ich'inda,
dish k'i var dahan ich'inda,
jovsat'un dagirmanı dur.*

'Fatherless in this world,
The eyes full of blood,
With what teeth remain in your mouth,
Your body is an (overworked) mill.'

The complaint of being fatherless seems a strangely unstoical sentiment for a man of 46, as one may reasonably reckon Sayat'-Nova to have been in 1758, unless, of course, his father Karapet had just died, which would give us a date for his death, otherwise unrecorded. One can assume from his reference to separation from mother and brother in April 1758 that they were still alive at that date; his song in four languages, performed on 6th March 1758, similarly implies that his mother was still living then:

*Ch'unk'i qan q(a)tm(i)sham o shirin sut'a,
Bas êndu hama im nanen dus arats.*¹²⁹

'Because I have mingled blood with her sweet milk (Azeri)
Precisely for that am I rejected by my mother' (Armenian)

The colophon to the Armenian manuscript copied by the former poet, as the priest Step'anos, in 1765/6, throws no light on these chronological matters, since in asking for remembrance for himself, his father Karapet, and his mother Sarra (Sarah),¹³⁰ he does not use the epithet *hangutz'eal* 'at rest, late' usual in the case of deceased relatives. That his father was dead by May 1758, however, is almost certain. With any other, less ambiguous, writer one would omit the *almost*. It could just be that, although he probably lived during his childhood with his father at Sanahin,¹³¹ he had felt himself spiritually to have been an orphan from early days. Perhaps he did not get on with his father. It is not unknown for

¹²⁹ T p. 52 (b), I fol. 22A, H p. 229.

¹³⁰ Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, fol. 276b, *Facsimile*, p. (143).

¹³¹ See above, Chapter One, pp. 5-6.

the fathers of poets to be disappointed with the choice of career of their sons: even Goethe's father, an Imperial Counsellor, preferred his son to study law. Perhaps Sayat'-Nova's appeal to the Georgian king in the above-mentioned poem as his 'spiritual mother and father' (*ch'emi sulieri ded-mama kharo*)¹³² indicates a deep-felt need for parental love. Despite his defiance of his enemies, one may deduce from his many desperate appeals to his beloved, his entreaties for benevolence and mercy from the King, that Sayat'-Nova was no model of machismo. But his was a hyper-sensitive nature, and one has no right to expect a poet to be an Achilles. (Though to be fair to both, Achilles, at least as a poetic creation of Homer, could be found 'delighting his soul with a clear-toned lyre, fair and richly wrought, whereon was a bridge of silver' (reminding us of Sayat'-Nova's *kamanch'a*), even if he had looted it from a city he had destroyed; while Sayat'-Nova is credited traditionally with a heroic martyr's death).

Sayat'-Nova does not feel himself entirely abandoned, however:

*Aghlaram ialquz bash ich'un,
geziram sardashi(m) (i)ch'un,¹³³
iaghshi ioldash, ioldash ich'un.
dard duva-darmani¹³⁴ dur.*

'I weep for myself alone.
I walk about for my true-friend,
For my good comrade, for my comrade.
He is a cure (and) remedy for my woe.'

Finally, he advises his Azeri listeners not to be late for the dawn prayer, following this up with a quick apology: he himself, there is nothing for it, is an Armenian:

*Gund doghanda q(i)bla¹³⁵ gahi
k'ej basanlar ch'ak'sun vahi.
Saiat'nova dini sai:
ink'ar et'mas — ermani dur.*

'At daybreak (pray) in the direction of the *qibla*
If you are late and suffer nightmares, (you are the) silly (one).
Consider Sayat'-Nova's religion:¹³⁶
He does not deny it, he is an Armenian.'

¹³² I fol. 17; B p. 18, st. 4, v. 5.

¹³³ The additions are necessary to maintain the octosyllabic verse.

¹³⁴ *duva*, AP *duwâ*' (P also *diwâ*', *dawâ*', S), Ottoman Turkish *devâ*, *divâ*, (R), 'medicine, remedy'.

¹³⁵ Miswritten *qbala*.

¹³⁶ Possibly, reading *sa(h)i*, 'Sayat'-Nova's religion, it is true: he does not deny it: it is Armenian'.

A final flourish which recalls the final phrase in the Armenian complaint of 1753:

*Sayat'-Novu gerezmanēn Hind, Habash, Arab mi ani.*¹³⁷

'Do not make Sayat'-Nova's grave in India, Abyssinia or Arabia.'

But that poem was one of his more serious odes. The final stanza of the present poem seems to be in a jocular vein, much in keeping with the jaunty style of the octosyllabic verses of his *dubeit*. There are some poets, e.g. Keats, who are always serious; others, e.g. Byron, are sometimes serious, and sometimes not. Sayat'-Nova, as we know from his Georgian verses aimed at the Catholicos Anton, and from his description of himself as a *khumar* or 'jester', was of the second sort: sometimes serious, sometimes not. Have we been perhaps too naive in taking his *babsız* 'fatherless' complaint as a genuine *cri de cœur*? It could be merely an item in a parody of the traditional minstrel, with as much foundation in reality as if it were, in an Azeri-Turkish tradition, said by Karagöz to Hadjivat. One cannot always be sure with Sayat'-Nova: in delving into his mind one finds oneself fearing for one's own.

A month later, however, the poet is in a more serious mood, complaining in a powerful Azeri song date 10th June of whomever and whatever had made him a minstrel.¹³⁸ In Elizabeth Barret Browning's phrase, 'making a poet out of a man' can be a painful process:

*Bu ashughlugh mana kheili dard oldu.
Alum ch'angli*¹³⁹ *p'ira baghli k'imi dur.*

'This minstrelsy has become (the source of) much woe for me.

My hand has become as something bound to the Old Man of the Lute.'

Later in the poem he is more respectful to his master:

Rahmat' olsun p'ir ustadun janina

'(Allah have) mercy upon the soul of the old teacher.'

He knows, after all, that it is his skill that has raised him up in the world:

*Rast edum, ch'oragum tuza iet'urdum.
dariadan ch'(ē)khart'tum duza iet'urdum.*

¹³⁷ In *Dun ēn gēlkhen imastun is*, I fol. 64A, H p. 20.

¹³⁸ T p. 80 (b), the Georgian annotation in the left margin reading *K' ese varsaghi arut'ins nat'k'omi t'ibat'vis I k'ks*. *UMV* '(In the name of) Christ, this *varsagh* was recited by Arut'in on 10th June 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758)'; Arasli, p. 41. H p. 181.

¹³⁹ Text *ch'angil* (falsely recalling T *çengal* 'hook', Az *chängäl* 'fork'), clearly to be amended to *ch'angli* 'one with a PT *chang* 'lute, harp'; cf. the form *ch'anglu* in the *Nov k'esalar* poem below. Or is a pum intended?

'I have eaten right, I have brought my bread to the salt.
I raised myself from the sea, I brought myself to the level (shore).'

Nevertheless, he feels himself trapped, as he is to complain in his 1759 Armenian ode 'The world is a cage' (*Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê*); and as in the post-1759 Georgian complaint 'O my unhappy head' (*She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*) — *es sak'meni ch'emis chkvisagan ari* 'These things come from being too clever' — he realises he is himself largely responsible for his fate. The verses thus closely link the poet's feelings of 1758 with the disastrous events of 1759:

jabrinan bir dardum yuza iet'urdum.
alti k'ok'lu, usti t'aghluk'imi dur.

'Forcibly I increased my one suffering an hundredfold,
Like one with his roots down below, with a vault above him.'

He sheds the traditional tears of blood, and like the traditional moth sullies his wings in the candle-wax. Love has brought him very low:

Akh(ē)r bu eshkh mani jalal eileir.
salup'tur bazara dalal eileir.
mani goran beila kh(i)al eileir.
bu saiat'nova araghli k'imi dur.

'Finally this love makes me gross.
It sends (me) to the market and makes (me) a pimp.
He who sees me thus makes of me an exhibition,
(Saying), This Sayat'-Nova is like an alcoholic.'

The Azeri words for the things that Love has made of Sayat'-Nova are polysemous. APT *jalâl* can mean variously 'a being or becoming bulky or coarse or gross' beside — certainly not intended here — 'being or becoming great in rank or importance' (Redhouse). The development to 'pride, arrogance, rage, fury' in Turkish (Redhouse) could be meant here. Arasli's emendation to *hilal* 'crescent moon' is inept. APT *dellâl* can mean 'a broker, a kind of perambulating auctioneer, a public crier, a pimp' — one can take one's choice: it is not likely, given the mention of the bazaar, that APT *dalâl* 'coquetry, blandishments' is here intended. APT *khayâl* can mean 'an incorporeal form as seen in imagination, a reflection in a mirror, a spectre ghost, imagination, fancy, a scarecrow, a magic-lantern show': the meaning is that the poet has made an exhibition of himself, in Shakespeare's phrase, 'a motley to the view' (*Sonnet* 110). One may feel that this catalogue of self-reproach has passed beyond mere poetic hyperbole, and has some basis in reality. *Ashugh* or

not, if it is not true, one would be well advised not to say it: that could well be left to one's *lausengiers*.

Another Azeri *öghütlämä* dated end of June 1758¹⁴⁰ begins with an attack on upstarts, criticism which could have confirmed old enemies and brought the poet new ones. As Topsfield says of the troubadour Marcabru, 'his vigorous moralising may have given him no easy success in courtly circles.'¹⁴¹ And was it not a case of throwing stones in a glass-house, for the Armenian Sayat'-Nova could hardly claim the most exalted origins in Georgian society? One wonders what bitter personal experience lies behind the opening advice

Nov k'esalar muvt' mal versa almaun.
har k'im goran diar p'ahlevan s(ě)za.

'If the nouveau-riches give money as a gift, do not take it.
Every one who sees you says "Great fellow!" to you.'

And is the misogyny of the next lines based upon the experience it implies, though we know that Sayat'-Nova, though doubtless unaware of Sir John Suckling's advice, never in fact died wasting in despair because a woman's fair. The poet lived to a great age, and, like Goethe, demonstrates that romantic passion does not adversely affect longevity. The obvious hyperbole of the verses suggests that it was not meant to be taken all that seriously:

Arvada bap'a iokh, s(ě)r uz demaun.
man olanda qalsun bu nishan s(ě)za.

'There is no fidelity (*wafâ*) in woman. Do not tell a hundred secrets.
Let my being at death's door be a hint to you.'

The poet claims the right to be heard, again not too convincingly, by virtue of the authority he has inherited from his *pîr*:

Ch'unk'i ch'anglu p'irdan ich'tum badani
qulagh asun deim oghut' sadani.

'Since I drank wine from the Old Man of the Lute,
Hearken to me when I offer a word of advice.'

¹⁴⁰ T p. 81, the Georgian annotation in the right margin reading *K'es ogut'lam(a) vars(a)ghi t'ibat'vis gasuls k'ks. UMV* '(In the name of) Christ, this *öghütlämä* varsagh (was recited) at the end of June 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758)'. I fol. 32, in his annotation refers, as often, to cryptic meanings (*azri*): *ese oghut'lama nastsavlebia saiat'novisgan nat'k'omi diakh kargi azrit' ari* 'This is an *öghütlämä*, instruction, recited by Sayat'-Nova. It is very good, with (hidden) meanings'. Ioane omits the *Tetrak's* st. 4. Hasrat'yan's Armenian translation, p. 201, abbreviates the annotation in the *Tetrak*.

¹⁴¹ Topsfield, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

With what seems to be a lack of Christian charity, he warns against the danger of raising up one of the disadvantaged classes:

*iuzil basliasan iet'im gadani,
akh(ě)r bir ish dushar sadiur qan s(ě)za.*

'If you feed the orphaned beggar for a hundred years,
In the end, if you need help, he will sell your blood.'

There is no reason to suppose that this advice is based upon personal experience, or even observation. It is a thought of the worldly-wise, and is probably quoted with bitter irony.

He continues his attack on those who have risen incongruously above their station:

*Har at' maniji Rostom(-i) Zal olmaz.
iuzil qaina da san, zahla bal olmaz.*

'Everyone who rides on horsback is not a Rustahm son of Zâl.
Boil it for a hundred years, corn can never be made into honey.'

Then a socio-economical comment in line with the many Armenian proverbs illustrating the disadvantages of the poor:

*Khalkh mali sanu inch'un mal olmaz.
degirmanda iat'tur, mazlardan s(ě)za.*

'The property of the people will never make you (the people) rich.
If there's a sufficiency in the mill, you'll get the chaff.'

Much of the poem comprises a worldly cynicism untypical of Sayat'-Nova who, as the above quotation shows, was on the side of the under-dog. The hidden meaning (*azri*) to which Ioane refers in his annotation suggests sarcasm.¹⁴² The advice on the unreliability of women above, and the advice in the final stanza —

nasha k'i ejjidan arvat' khanadan

'Good for him who wisely (keeps away) from the woman's house' —

is out of keeping with the troubadour's normal pursuit of *fin'amors*. Perhaps, however, this can count as evidence that he had been burnt, as he complains in many other poems, once too often. He is by no means finished, however. Come on, Sayat'-Nova, he says in his *takhalluş*, settle the hash of these upstarts, these men of little worth who batten upon the ordinary people, once and for all:

Saiat'nova, sozun soila, mat' edan!

'Sayat'-Nova, say your piece, giving them checkmate!'

¹⁴² See above, p. 148.

Unfortunately, we know that within a year, it will be the poet himself who loses his King.

Although Ioane has not remembered it, and Arasli does not include it in his collection, the last dated Azeri poem of 1758, that of 9th/20th July, is one of the most revealing, and in its pathos worthy to rank beside the great Armenian odes of this time. It begins 'Let Death's foot finish me off' (*Olam ayagha b{a}jitur sun*),¹⁴³ an anthropomorphic image that is used by Horace:

*Pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
regumque turris...*

(*Odes*, Liv.11)

'Pale Death kicks with his indifferent foot at (the doors of) pauper' hovels
And the castles of kings...'

Sayat'-Nova calls his poem an *ilahi* or poem addressed to God, and it has indeed much in common with the more despairing of the laments attributed to David, e.g. *Psalm* 69: 'Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters' (v. 14) — drowning metaphors that have many parallels in the works of Sayat'-Nova. Like the Psalmist, Sayat'-Nova has faith in God ('I appeal to my Almighty (God)', *gediruma yalvaruram*, st. 1 v. 4). The ambiguities of the first stanza are such that one wonders whether they would not have been considered too cryptic even for the *trobar clus* of Provence, one the best exponents of which, Marcabru, was not certain that he understood all the implications of his verse himself.¹⁴⁴ There are no doubt thoughts that come into the mind of man that cannot be put into words, some of which may yet be expressed by the musician or the artist: though one hesitates to believe that they come into the minds of poets as often as some, reluctant to clarify matters with their Muse, and to search a little longer for the best words in the best order, would have us think. And

¹⁴³ T p. 38. The Georgian annotation in the left margin reads *K' ese ilahi arut'inas nat'k'omi (m)kat'at'vis T' k'ks. UMV* '(In the name of) Christ this *ilahi* was recited by Arut'in on July 9th 446 of the chronicon (A.D. 1758)'. The *ba-* of *baitursun* is doubtless a slip of the pen. H Arm. tr., p. 158.

¹⁴⁴ *Per savi.l tenc ses doptanssa / Cel qui de mon chant devina / So que chascus motz declina, / Si cum la razos despleia, / Qu'ieu mezeis sui en erranssa / D'esclarzir paraul'escura* 'I consider indubitably wise the man who divines in my song what each word indicates as the theme unfolds: for I myself am uncertain ('sujet à l'erreur', Dejeanne, 'in Not, Bedrängnis', Lewent) how to clarify obscure speech', cit. et tr., L.M. Paterson, *Troubadours and eloquence*, Oxford, 1975, p. 16.

Sayat^c-Nova was one of those who, often one can imagine for good reason, aimed to be deliberately obscure.

Olam ayagha bit'ursun, ieruma ialvaruram.
mukhanat'a hal et'masun, s(.).ruma ialvaruram.
gech'an gunlar iada gelmaz, geruma ialvaruram.
olua rahma iqlaram, gediruma ialvaruram.

Azeri *yalvarmaq* means 'to entreat, beseech (someone to do something)', but since the objects of the entreaty in this poem are mostly inanimate, 'appeal to', even 'rely upon', are more apt.¹⁴⁵

'Let Death tread (men) underfoot, I appeal to my place.
 Let him not release the treacherous fellow: I appeal to my secret (?).
 The passing days are not remembered: I appeal to what (comes) after me.
 I beg mercy for the dead; I appeal to my Almighty.'

TAz *yer* is polysemous, 'the earth, ground, place, site, place special to a thing, place sufficient for a thing, interval, territory, situation, place of service or employment, etc.' (R), 'scar, trace, rôle, task' (Steuerwald), 'stake (in games), tare weight' (Äzizbäy). Here it appears to be on his 'firm position' that the poet relies (cf. T *yerinde durmak* 'to stand ones ground' ('noch immer dasein, sich ruhig verhalten', Steuerwald), whatever that may be imagined to be based upon: one hopes not merely the *jir* 'salary' of the final verse. Lipskerov translates it 'I seek protection' (*krov ishchu*),¹⁴⁶ though taking cover is hardly in keeping with the defiant tone of these verses, which would suggest rather something like 'I know where I stand.' The poet clearly does not wish to be associated with the *mukhannat'* (Az *mükhännät* = *kha'in* 'betrayers, renegades, Judas' (Äzizbäy); APT *mukhannath/mukhannes* 'bent, weak, impotent, without power of procreation, hermaphrodite, effeminate, object, old catamite' (S), i.a. 'anyone who stoops to any kind of meanness', (Red-house)). It would be clearer as to whether the poet is referring to base fellows in general, or one of his own enemies in particular, if one knew what the *s.r* is to which he appeals. The rules of the *radif* require the four words here preceding the final part of the compound to rhyme. As written, *ieruma/s.ruma/geruma/gediruma*, they do not, which could well have caused the poet's Azeri listeners to wince. It is not possible to

¹⁴⁵ Hasrat'yan translates the verb as Arm. *man gal*, presumably in the sense of 'search for, pursue, give importance to' (Malkhasyantz', mgs. 6 and 7); likewise Lipskerov, apud Gaysaryan, p. 213, Russian *ishchu* 'I seek'.

¹⁴⁶ Apud Gaysaryan, p. 213.

regularise the rhyme words reading the fourth as **gederuma*, and fitting *s.ruma* into the scheme as **seruma* since the refrain rhymes of the subsequent stanzas require *-iruma*, and that T *ser* (P *sar*) 'head' is not meant is clear from its occurrence in v. 5 as *saruma*. The most obvious T word, suggested also by the fact that the omission of a vowel in this Georgian transcription of Turkish indicates an *ı/ĩ*, is *sır* (*sir*, AP *sirr*) 'secret, mystery', which would almost, but not quite, rhyme with *gedir(uma)*. But to what secret Sayat⁻Nova would be referring remains a mystery, except insofar as his Armenian listeners would undoubtedly think of Arm. *sêr* 'love'. 'Secret love' might well sum up what Sayat⁻Nova was appealing to, and what the 'betrayal' had to do with that he has, in true troubadour style, emphasised many times over.

geruma appears to be formed upon TAz *geri* 'rear, what is behind (something or someone)'. Though the formation is not morphologically usual, the poet seems to be using it with the first person possessive suffix (here in the dative) like Arm. *yet-s* or *yetoy-s* 'after me' (*yetoy* i.a. 'not present, in the future', Malkhasyantz^e, mg. 6) in the sense of not what is behind me, i.e. in my past, but what (is to come) after me, i.e. in the future, not in the present passing days. Hasrat⁻yan's 'my tomorrows' (*vaghiris*) interprets it thus. Lipskerov's 'I seek new frontiers' (*novikh beregov ischchu*) could be misleading: there is little of the futuristic visionary in Sayat⁻Nova, who had more than he could manage in coming to terms with the present.

Although one cannot find another example of APTAz *q* written in the *Tetrak* as *g* (though *g* for *gh*, which is a common Armenian and Georgian pronunciation of APT *q*, occurs for example in Ioane's *ogut'lama* for *oghütlämä*, which signifies a certain phonetic confusion), *gedir-* points to APTAz *qadîr qâdir* 'powerful, almighty', one of the principal epithets of God, less likely to Az *qâdir* in its sense of 'worth, significance, price' (Äz), thus 'to my own worth'. Sayat⁻Nova's form is genuinely dialectal: 'in dialects and loanwords *q* is often replaced by the voiced velar *g*' (Shiraliyev, *Dialektî i govori* ..., p. 40, where both examples given are Russian loans; the poet is thus a useful 18th-century witness).

In the second stanza the poet laments the fact that his calling as minstrel cruelly exacerbates the sensitive nature with which he was born:

Bu ashughlugh bilmanam k'i nadan qondi saruma.
mani divana eiladi, nar art'urdi naruma.
dokuz ai mani baslamish, ram aoma(z) daruma.
ola sutinan a(l)misham, shiruma ialvaruram.

‘This minstrelsy, I do not know how it has alighted on my head!
It has driven me mad, fire has been heaped on my fire.
For nine months it has oppressed me: it brings no peace to my (dire) straits.
Perhaps I imbibed it with my (mother’s) milk: I appeal to my (Persian)
milk.’

This play on TAz *süt* ‘milk’ and P *shîr* ‘milk’ is meant to show that he inherited his poetic nature genetically, and then drank at the well of Persian poetry, which he beseeches, perhaps to give him comfort and relief.

The third stanza is sentimentally confused. After what must be an appeal for sufficient funding and a further complaint that minstrelsy is driving him mad, he fears, in a striking image, that Love has grown cold, and caused his downfall. He is tormented by the thought that he has neglected the life spiritual, but appeals for help from everyday life, perhaps from William Cory’s ‘this warm kind world’, though such approbation would be rare indeed in Sayat’-Nova.

*Ashughlugh bir deirman dur, donmaz susuz, ch’aisiz.
akh(ē)r mani junun edar, aqlum qonmaz¹⁴⁷ zais(i)z.
eshkh gulustana donup’ tur, varaqlari sais(i)z.
man, ha, zabari bidmanam,¹⁴⁸ ziruma ialvaruram.*

‘Minstrelsy is a mill, it will not turn without water, without tea.
It drives me mad, *enfin*, does not settle in my mind without (causing) damage.

The rose-garden of Love is stricken with frost, its (fallen) leaves are numberless.

I, you see, am not attached to higher things. I appeal to the here below.’

In the fourth stanza the poet complains, vividly, of drowning in an ocean of love, which washes away and bleaches his soul, prevents him from earning his livelihood, and reduces his professional competence:

*Dushtum eskhun dariasina, dozmeiram langina.
janumda jovsat’ qalmamish, gelmeiram rangina.*

¹⁴⁷ Text *qonimaz*, an unacceptable form that would in any case give a hemistich of 8 instead of the required 7 syllables. One may note that the diphthongs *ei* and *ai* count as two syllables.

¹⁴⁸ The third character appears to be a 𐌆𐌇 *d* changed to 𐌆𐌇 *l*, but *bilmanam* ‘I do not know’, already used in the poem, would be lame. I read as from T *bitmek* i.a. (with dative) ‘be very fond of’ (Hony), ‘vernarrt sein in’ (Steuerwald), a meaning not given by Redhouse, or by Äzizbäy for Az *bitmāk* ‘grow, sprout, come to completion’ (usual T meanings); *zabari* would then be better amended to **zabara*, Az dative of PT *zabar* ‘above, high, superior’ (S), ‘the top or upper part of a thing, the upper direction’ (R).

*iqridaum*¹⁴⁹ *ierishamadum ashughlughun dangina.*
Hala daimen ashagirdam, p'iruma ialvaruram.

'I have fallen into the sea of your love. I cannot still the rolling-waves.
 In my soul no substance remains. I cannot restore its colour.
 I am (held) in aversion. I could not attain¹⁵⁰ the minstrel's penny.
 I am now forever an apprentice. I (must) appeal to my master.'

The final stanza reveals physical and spiritual distress. The poet's dreams of success and a better life are dissolved. He is still pursued by an enemy. All he can hope for is that his wages will continue to be paid:

Bu ashughlugh nar atash dur, v(.)luma baslanup'tur.
iandi janum, iandi jismum, khialum qaslanup'tur.
aghlar saiat'nova, aghlar, khialun gaslanup'tur.
dush(m)animtan zai olmazsun, jiruma ialvaruram.

'This minstrelsy is fire and flame, my freedom is restricted.
 My soul has burned up, my body has burned up, my dream is cut short.
 Sayat'-Nova laments, laments "Your dream is cut short."
 From my enemy may I suffer no harm. I appeal to my pay.'

v.l- may be *P wil* 'victory, happy issue, superiority' (Steingass), though this is unlikely, since it is not attested in Turkish and Azeri. It is more likely to be, Sayat'-Nova regularly ignoring final APTAz vowels in suffixed nouns (e.g. *agh-er-*), APT *walâ*, meaning variously 'kindred, relationship, assistance, power, authority, the right and power over one lately set free, freedom, liberty, love, assistants, friends' (S), 'nearness, propinquity, proprietorship, the state or quality of the next of kin, the propinquity and next of kinship of a master to his enfranchised slave, also that of the enfranchised slave to his former master' (Redhouse); APT *wilâ* 'helping, befriending, friendship, continuation' (Steingass), 'succession, a mutually loving, mutual love and affection' (Redhouse). There is much here that is pertinent to Sayat'-Nova's complained of position as 'Gurgen Khan's serf', and what he might have hoped from his relationship with the King, which he could, in 1758, feel to be melting away like an idle dream, partly owing to the persecution of his 'enemy'. If all he can rely upon in his *jir* (PAz *jîra* 'daily allowance', Steingass; 'ration', Äzizbäy) — and the everyday Azeri word, not listed

¹⁴⁹ *iqri-* for APTAz *ikrâh* 'forcing against one's will, dislike, abhorrence, aversion, detestation'; on *q* for *k* in the Kakhi dialect, see Shiraliev, p. 40.

¹⁵⁰ The verb indicates a gradual process, a maturing: T *irishmek, erishmek* 'arrive gradually, mature gradually' (R). The verse consists of the required 15 syllables, but they are here distributed at best 9 + 6 instead of the usual 8 + 7, rarely for Sayat'-Nova.

in Turkish by Redhouse and Hony, suggests an abrupt and bitter bathos — it is not much to show for years of minstrelsy, many of them at court.

There can be no doubt that this Azeri poem is heartfelt, no mere exercise. The poet's distress has even affected his normal expertise, for apart from the irregular placing of the caesura in stanza 4 verse 3, the rhyme scheme of the final stanza, with *khiyalum qaslanuptur* "rhyming" with *khiyalun qaslanup'tur*, is far beneath Sayat'-Nova's high standard in this regard. There are things on the poet's mind more important than rhyme, and the breakdown of the latter mirrors his own.

One of the strangest of Sayat'-Nova's songs, one which few other than he could have composed, his *Poem in Four Languages*, was also performed in 1758, on 6th/17th March. The *Tetrak* describes it merely as a *qâfiya*, a poem: '(By the divinity of) Christ, this *qâfiya* in four languages, Georgian, Persian, Tatar [*i.e.* Azeri], Armenian, was recited by Arut'in on 6th March 446 of the chronicon [A.D. 1758]'. Ioane, however, without giving a date, hints at deeper meanings: 'This is a good *qâfiya* with samples of four languages recited by Sayat'-Nova with various meanings.¹⁵¹ In form, it is a far cry from mildly macaronic poems such as Dunbar's *Timor mortis conturbat me* or Byron's *Zôê mou se agapô*. The first quatrain of this five-stanza poem consists of two verses of four hemistichs in, alternately, Georgian (in pride of place as befitting Sayat'-Nova's position as Irakli's court minstrel, and perhaps because his most serious complaints to the King are in this language), Persian (the language of the civilisation with which the poet sought to revitalise Georgian culture), Azeri (the *lingua franca*, that of the majority of his compositions), and Armenian (his own language, that of his profoundest odes); the following two verses of the quatrain are composed of hemistichs in the same order. The successive four quatrains consist of verses, each one in a different language, in the same order, Armenian thus providing the recurrent rhyme or *radîf*. Hasrat'yan transliterates the original Georgian script into Armenian characters in an eclectic text based on the *Tetrak* and Ioane, with some emendations, and gives an Armenian translation.¹⁵² The following text reproduces the readings of the *Tetrak* except where noted:

¹⁵¹ (In Georgian): *K' ese qap'ia ot'khi enit' k'art'uli parsuli t'at'aru{r}li, somkhuri, arut'inas nat'k'omi mart'is V k'ks UMV*, T p. 52; *Ese D enis magalit'it' kargi qap'ia aris saiat'novasgan nat'k'omi skhva da skhva azrebit'*, I fol. 22A.

¹⁵² H pp. 229-230 and 83 respectively.

*Es ra momivida.^a Bibin ch'i kardem.
var get^e boini burukh,^b tanen dus arats.
chkva tsavagebine, az^c sheshi nard^d em.
divana geziram^e, banen dus arats.*

*Me khom gavamtsare tkbili t'ut'a.^f
t'azkhiri^g man darem,^h k'alagi k'ut'a.ⁱ
ch'unk'i qan qatmisham^j ol^k shirin sut'a,
bas endu^l hama im^m nanen dus arats.*

*Bulbuli var, vart's ep'araⁿ alali.
bibin ch'i k'ard hurizada^o jalali.
it'urmisham javahiri^p halali.
madan^q ch'unes badeshkanen dus arats.*

*Niadag vitiri, vijakhi vishi.^r
ch'i paida jan dadem namiret^s p'ishi.
bu dar^t k'i man ch'ak'tum^u ch'akmasun k'ishi.
och'ov ch'(ě)li^v sirekanen dus arats.*

*Modi saiat'nova, shen tz'odvili khar.
qurbanat^w mimirem rai b(ě)radar.
buna man qabulam, ei p'arvardigar.
hok'is^x ch'anis^y drakhti janen dus^z arats.*

'What has happened to me? [Georgian] Look what I have done! [Persian]
Clear off,^a you hangdog,^b [Azeri], thrown out of house-and-home! [Armenian]

a T writes *mamivida*, laps. cal. or broad pronunciation of *a?* / *mmivida*. After this verse T has two words in unintelligible Azeri crossed out, viz. *isen duhamaim* (or *duhamish?*).
b T; I *boni burkh*. **c** T; I *asz* (laps. cal.). **d** I, as required by the rhyme; T *nar*. **e** I; T *gziram*. **f** This is I's st. 3. **g** T, I; better amended with Hasrat'yan to *takhziri* (APT *taqsir*). **h** T; I (defective in Persian) *man dari*. **i** T; I *gut'a*. **j** I; T *qt'msham*. **k** I; T *o*. **l** T; I *endur*. **m** T; I *hamai*. **n** T; I (st. 4) *vard zed p'ara* '?'. **o** T; I *urizada*. **p** I; T *javairi*. **q** T; I *mada*. **r** I; T *vashi* (non-rhyming). **s** T; I *aqli boi dadem namiet*. **t** T; I *bud dar*; H amends needlessly to *dard*. **u** T; I *ch'ak'dum*. **v** I; T *ch'ili*. **w** Amended from T *qurbanit*, I *qurbunet* (the second -u- of this latter possibly reproducing the dialectal (Teheran, etc.) pronunciation of P *â* as *û*; P *qurbân-at bi-gardam* 'may I become your sacrifice', meaning not much more than 'my dear man', but here with more serious intent. **x** T; I writes this with an initial *Ⴣ* *h'*, the ancient 38th letter of the Georgian alphabet, now obsolete, but miswrites the following vowel as *a*. **y** T; I *ch'hanis* **z** I; T *dusus* with first -us- crossed out.

a *var get* (Az *getmāk* 'go') is probably connected with Az *var-gāl etmāk* 'go up and down' (raskhazhivat', Ä), perhaps on P *war* (= *bar*) 'up, upon', Pahlavi *awar* 'hither! come! in the sense of Arm *ari* 'rise up! come!' which reinforces imperatives, also in SN; or AP *warâ* 'behind'? Armenians would think of *var* (Cl *vayr*) 'down', but no such Azeri loanword from Armenian is listed. **b** Az *boynu buruq* 'one with a twisted neck', cf. Arm *vizē tsērel* 'hang the head, be despondent; beseech s.o.' (Malkhasyantz'); H *vizēt tsuř*.

I have ruined my mind! [*Georgian*] I am spikenard (spilled) from the bottle [*Persian*]

I wander about, mad, [*Azeri*], bereft of reason! [*Armenian*]

Have I then turned the sweet mulberry^c sour? [G]

I am a failure^d, my battle-plume^e is docked! [P]

Because I have mixed blood with her sweet milk, [Az]

Precisely for that am I rejected by my mother! [Arm]

I am the Nightingale, a Kestrel^f has hidden in the Rose. [G]

Look what the houri-born majestic one has done! [P]

I have lost my legitimate jewel! [Az]

Thou hast no ruby^g from Badashkhan! [Arm]

I weep unceasingly, I utter sighs!^h [G]

What profits it if I give my life that my art may not die? [P]

These straitsⁱ I have got into may no-one else suffer! [Az]

May no man be rejected by his beloved! [Arm]

Come, Sayat'-Nova, thou art a sinner! [G]

May I die a sacrifice to thee, brother traveller!^j [P]

I accept (all) this, Almighty One!^k [Az]

Do not expel my soul from the Garden of Life!' [Arm]

c *t'ut'a* (also G *tuta*); APT *tût* 'mulberry', of two main varieties, white and black (Bedevian, nos. 2338, 2339), an unusual image for Love or the Beloved, and not cited as such by R or S. d *Lit.* 'I have a failing', APT *taqsîr* 'failing in duty, fault, sin' (R). e P *kalakî* 'plume worn on the head by the youths in Persia in battle and on great occasions' (S): the poet is 'crest-fallen'. H, p. 255, otherwise helpful, notes that in this first edition (1945) he deemed this verse, and the second hemistich of st. 1 v. 3, almost incomprehensible and extremely dubious, but that he was (in 1963) no longer of that opinion; unfortunately, he proceeds to mistranslate into Armenian both passages: here, 'I drew a lance', st. 1 v. 3 'I became a swimmer'. f *alali* 'Turmfalke (Tinnunculus)', Tsch. This is the most common species of hawk in Europe, and swooping upon among other things small birds on the ground is particularly dangerous for such as the nightingale. g *madan* lit. 'mineral'; Badakhshân in Afghanistan was celebrated for its rubies, and gave its name to the common word for 'ruby' in Georgian, *badakhshi*, *badakhsha*, *badakhshani*, *balakhshi* (see *The Man in the Panther Skin*, tr. Wardrop, §§ 5, 72, 176, etc.); the above form is metathesised (perhaps confused with P *badishghân* 'ivy, convolvulus', S). h *vijakhi vishi*: G *jakheba* 'push' ('stossen', Tsch); cf. French *pousser un soupir*, but Tsch, M, and Ch' do not list this as a Georgian usage. i *dar*, TAz *dar* 'narrow, narrow place, strait, difficulty', Az *dara dūshmāk* 'get into difficulties' (Ä); H needlessly amends to the common PTAz *dard*, *dârd* 'pain, pangs of love'. j *rai b(i)radar*: P *râi* (beside *râh*) 'road', *birâdar* 'brother', though no such *tat-purusha* compound is listed: cf. the regular P *râhbarî* 'guide'. Read perhaps *râhî*, *birâdar* 'traveller, brother'. The road is doubtless the road of love: cf. Hâfiz, *Hamchû Hâfiz gharîb dar râh-i 'ishq / ba-maqâmî rasîdê-am, ki ma-purs* 'Like Hâfiz, a wanderer along the road of love, / I have reached my destination, do not ask where!', ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 26, v. 7, p. 60. k *p'(a)rv(a)rdigar*, the same form as in the 1753 Azeri poem *Shuk'ur olsun yaradana var edan p'arvardigara* 'Thanks be to the Creator, to the (All)-nourisher who gives existence' (T p. 75); better would be *p'arvardagar*, for P *parvardagâr* 'Omnipotence (as nourishing all)', used with reference to a king as well as to God (S).

The content of this poem depicts a man in mental and spiritual trouble. He is conscious of his own worth, of being something of value that is being cast away, as it were perfume out of a bottle. He has, as he hints in his poem on the Master Bridge-builder, devoted his life to his art, but to no avail. He is rejected by his beloved, who has wounded him deeply, a fate he wishes upon no other. He has an enemy, or a rival, lurking like a dangerous hawk by the Nightingale's beloved Rose. He has been cast out of house and home, through his own fault. He is rejected by his mother: his mixing blood with her milk is doubtless an hyperbolic image for causing her pain, as it were one of the wounds of the Madonna, depicted in art by stabbing daggers, used as an image by Sayat'-Nova for the pain inflicted by the beloved.¹⁵³ He feels he has soured what once was all sweetness ('Have I then turned the sweet mulberry sour?'). He has lost his 'legitimate jewel', and no longer possesses a ruby from Badekhshan. This is surely a most revelatory statement, for a mistress could never count as a legitimate jewel, and in Scripture, and thus wellknown to the future priest, a precious jewel, not necessarily in traditions other than English the ruby, is a symbol for the virtuous wife.¹⁵⁴ She, in his case, must have been Marmar, for he was, as we have seen, almost certainly married by 1758, there being nothing to support the face-saving theory that he married her, the mother of his four children, after his disgrace in 1759. It may even be that 'thrown out of the house' represented the actual effect of a domestic quarrel, for there is sufficient evidence in the poet's work that his wife would have had good cause: Sayat'-Nova's love-poems are hardly addressed to a wife any more than Shakespeare's sonnets were addressed to Anne Hathaway, and the sincerity that, despite troubadour conventions, shines through, guarantees that they were addressed to someone: to whom exactly, that is the question. The poem ends on a penitent note: the poet confesses to his sins and is ready to accept chastisement from the All-nourisher, as long as his soul be not barred from the Garden of Life. This is, however,

¹⁵³ *Běrnîl ê êshkhi danakĕn, sirtĕs kĕtratîl ê uzum* 'She has grasped the dagger of love, she wants to chop up my heart', in *Ajab k'û sirtĕn ov shinitz'*, st. 3 v. 3, H p. 60.

¹⁵⁴ *Proverbs*, 31,10, where the Armenian Vulgate has 'precious jewels' (*zakans patu-akans*) for Hebrew *pĕnîyîm* probably 'red coral' (Luther 'Perle'); 'ruby' is probably Hebr. *nôphek*, as decorating the High Priest's shield of office at *Exodus*, 28,18, where Arm. has *karkehan* 'carbunculus' (NBHL), Luther 'Rubin' (A.V. 'emerald'). *Proverbs* was one of the works attributed to Solomon that Sayat'-Nova, as the priest Step'anos, copied in his manuscript of 1765/6, Erevan (Matenadaran) MS no. 4270, from which one may deduce a special interest on his part, and the influence behind the image in this poem.

somewhat ambiguous, since the Persian title of *parvardagâr* could refer to an earthly ruler as well as God. His 'brother of the road' could be using *râi/râh* in its mystic sense of 'the right way, the rites of religion, especially of Islam' (Redhouse), or as a Pilgrim's Progress, the *râh-i hâjiyân* 'road of the pilgrims (to Mecca)' (Steingass), Sayat'-Nova, as the good Christian he was proud to be, thinking also of the *óðós*, 'the way' that is Christ. But it could also refer to the *râh-i 'ishq*, the Way of Love, along which he would have as one companion, the famous lover and (possibly) mystic Hâfiz.

*Hamchû Hâfiz gharîb dar râh-i 'ishq*¹⁵⁵
ba-maqâmî rasidé-am, ki ma-purs

'Like Hâfiz, a wanderer along the road of love,
 I have reached my destination. Do not ask where!'

This poem cannot be dismissed as a merely traditional *plainte*. 1758 was too critical a year in the poet's life for him to indulge in artificialities. Linking four languages together by reason, rhyme and hendecasyllabic metre is clearly a *tour de force*, and since most of Sayat'-Nova's poems, whether in Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri, contain and play on words each from the other languages (though the Azeri poems comprise no loans from Georgian), it seems remarkable that he has kept the individual languages apart in their respective verses; though the *drakht-i jan* of the final Armenian verse — *dirakht-i jân* in Persian can mean only 'Tree of Life' — mixes the two languages in using the Armenian loanword from Persian in its Armenian sense of 'garden' or 'Paradise'. Sayat'-Nova's intention, however, was not merely to display his virtuosity. He may be using the four languages so that the whole civilised world, as he knows it, be told of his suffering, and perhaps Irakli II in particular. It might also be meant to symbolise this assumed rôle as the Master Bridge Builder between the four main cultures of the Caucasus, in which the King, as ruler of a multiracial society, would be politically interested. The form of the poem may be of biographical significance in showing the state of the poet's mind in the last two years of his poetic career. If it is true that a man acquires another ego with every language he learns, Sayat'-Nova's personality could be considered to be quadrupled — or split into four. Some degree of cultural schizophrenia is common among inhabitants of heterogenous societies (in particular, perhaps, with Armenians living in Muslim communities), but it is rarely of

¹⁵⁵ Ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 26, v. 7, p. 60.

a pathological nature. Since it is essential to consider a poet's work, especially that of a public performer such as Sayat'-Nova, in its relationship to its audience, one must ask what, in this instance, would have been the effect of this strange quadrilingual production on its hearers at the Georgian court? Many would have understood most of the languages, and some would have understood them all, but they may well have wondered what it was all about. Let us imagine, by way of an experiment that may go some way towards answering the question, that an English minstrel presented himself at the court of Catherine the Great, the contemporary of Sayat'-Nova and Irakli II. Her court was just as multilingual as that of Georgia. The native language of the Empress was German; that she learned Russian well is witnessed by her letters to e.g. her favourite Captain Rimsky-Korsakov (if these, in 1966 for sale in London, are genuine); she was interested in promoting French culture, and her courtiers would have prided themselves on their French, the language of civilisation, while speaking Russian to their servants. English would not have been so well known, though some of the more commercially minded may have had a smattering. Undeterred, indeed perhaps encouraged, by this latter lamentable ignorance of the language of Shakespeare, the Englishman could have held forth thus:

Qu'est-ce qui m'arrive? Ich tobe, ungestüm!

Ukhodi, krivosheya, sans board and bed!

Je perds la tête, bin vergoss'nes Parfüm.

Sbilisya ya s dorogi, all wit and reason fled!

La douce mûre blanche, je l'ai aigrie.

Ich habe versagt, bin geschlachtetes Vieh!

V sladkoe moloko tī krov vmeshal, uvī,

And so art thou now for thy dear mother dead!

Rossignol, le Faucon dans ta Rose s'ébat!

Die Gebieterin tat mir ein Leid, sieh da!

Poteryav zakonnīi zhemchug navsegda,

Thou hast lost thy pure ruby of deepest red.

Je pleure sans cesse, pousse des soupirs.

Gibst du dein Leben für die Kunst, was nützt das dir?

Dlya nas vsekh zhestokiī chasto ètot mir,

But may no other lover need such tears to shed!

Saīat-Nova, tu es pêcheur, c'est du beau!

Bruder, auf der Liebe Weg, sind nicht alle so?

Nakazhi, Vsemoguchiī, prinimayu vso,

So my chastened soul to the Garden of Life be led!

Sayat'-Nova's original is doubtless more skilled and melodious. It seems, however, certain that many among his audience, like that we have imagined at the court of Catherine the Great — and the author of the 'English poet's' pastiche must confess to doubting his own sanity in assembling such a piece — would have found good reason to say Amen to his fourth verse, and conclude that Sayat'-Nova had indeed taken leave of his senses. It has been mooted above that a nervous breakdown may have led to the poet's dismissal, *melancholia pathologica* not being expected of one who, as he described himself, was for most not much more than a court jester. The Poem in Four Languages, therefore, is not to be considered as a mere technical *tour de force*: it is rather to be accepted as documentary evidence of the poet's state of mind in 1758. But there is undoubtedly reason in his madness: and that is founded upon his rôle as the Master Bridge-Builder between the four main cultures of the Caucasus.

Such are the poems, Armenian and Azeri, dated at A.D. 1758. That they betray a large measure of mental and spiritual anguish that cannot be explained away as traditional troubadour *plainte* is made more certain by the fact that we know, with hindsight, what in essence came upon the poet's unhappy head a year later, of which, since he accepts in more than one poem that he is himself responsible for it, he must have had a premonition. It is, however, one thing to know that one is well advanced along a dangerous path: and another to know how to get off it. No-one would wish his soul to be excluded from the Garden of Life: but few are in any hurry to get there. Certainly not Sayat'-Nova. His chances, if chance there be, of entering Paradise were soon to be enhanced, we are led to believe, by the cure of souls that he was soon to receive. But they were not greatly appreciated.

CHAPTER SIX

DISMISSAL AND EXILE

Our attempt to establish some facts concerning Sayat'-Nova's life, and if possible an explanation for them, based upon his works, has brought us to the year of his swan songs. 1759 was a disastrous year for the poet. He was then, if one can credit, as we have largely done, the date for his birth given by his first editor Akhverdian in 1852, namely 1712, aged 46 or 47, a potentially dangerous time, psychologists tell us, in the development of the average male. In that year he was dismissed from the Georgian court by his patron Irakli II, and forced into a position as married priest at Enzelli/Anzal on the foreign shores of the Caspian 500 miles to the south-east. Nowhere is it specifically stated what his offence was.

There is such a remarkable parallel between this fate and that of a famous ancient Roman poet that one may here be allowed a short excursion, a sort of Plutarchian parallel life, that, as in the case of that eminent precursor of Montaigne and Bacon, can throw light on the character and destiny of the two subjects. The parallels between the end of the poetic careers of both are such that were one a believer in Reincarnation and saw any sense in living virtually the same life over again, one would be surely tempted to appeal to them as proof. It is not, however, as such that the facts are here presented. There would doubtless be coincidences linking the lives of ancient and modern shopkeepers and ladies' maids had they proved to be as articulate as poets.

In A.D. 8 one of the greatest poets of the Augustan era was 'relegated' to Tomis, the present-day Constanța on the Rumanian Black Sea Coast, by the Emperor. *Relegatio*, as Arthur Wheeler describes it, was milder than the *exilium* of the late republic in that the poet's property was not confiscated and his civic rights were not taken from him, but it was harsher in Ovid's case, in that he was ordered to stay in one designated locality. The *exul* of the republican period might wander where he would provided he kept beyond a prescribed radius from Rome.¹ He was never

¹ *Ovid in six volumes*, ed. and tr. Arthur Leslie Wheeler, 2nd ed. revised by G.P. Gould, Loeb Classical Library, vol. VI, London, 1988, p. xviii.

to see Rome again. 1751 years later, Sayat'-Nova, surely the leading Tiflis poet of his day, was relegated by the ruler he called his Emperor to Anzal, a port on the Caspian Sea on the extreme eastern borders of the king's domains, and though he subsequently moved closer to the capital, to Sanahin, and may have met his end while taking refuge from Persian attacks in Tiflis, was never again to resume his former functions. The exact reason for Ovid's punishment is not known. He himself refers to 'two crimes, a poem and a blunder (which) have brought me ruin; of my fault in the one I must keep silent, for my worth is not such that I may reopen thy wounds, O Caesar':

*perdiderunt cum me duo crimina, carmen et error,
alterius facti culpa silena mihi:
nam non sum tanti, renovem ut tua vulnera, Caesar,
quen nimio plus est indoluisse semel.*²

I would be better to translate *crimen* as 'charge', since Ovid was guilty, as Wheeler himself points out, of no 'crime' (*scelus*).³ But to have offended the Emperor was a serious misdemeanour. The poem to which he refers was his *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Love), undoubtedly pornographic, a handbook for courtesans, though this had been published years before his exile without any reaction of a practical nature from Augustus, though he could hardly have approved. His *error*, as he says, is not spelled out, nor can it be without repeating the original offence, though it must have been fairly common knowledge. We know that it stemmed from something he had seen, as he tells a friend: '... no crime is in my heart, but a mistake is responsible for the beginning of my sin. 'Tis not a brief tale or safe to say what chance made my eyes witness a baleful evil. My mind shrinks in dread from that time, as 'twere from its own wounds, and the very thought of it renews my pain; whatever can bring such sense of shame should be covered and hidden in the darkness of night. Nothing then will I say except that I have sinned, but by that sin sought no reward; folly is the proper name for my crime, if you wish to give the true title to the deed':

*... nullum scelus est in pectore nostro,
principiumque mei criminis error habet.
nec breve nec tutum, quo sint mea, dicere, casu
lumina funesti conscia facta mali;
mensque reformidat, veluti sua vulnera, tempus*

² *Tristia*, III, 207-210, *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

*illud, et admonitu fit novus ipse dolor,
et quaecumque adeo possunt afferre pudorem,
illa tegi caeca condita nocte decet.
nil igitur referam nisi me peccasse, sed illo
praemia peccato nulla petita mihi,
stultitiamque meum crimen debere vocari,
nomina si facto reddere vera velis.*⁴

In a previous passage in the *Tristia* it may be that his reference to Actaeon's sin and punishment comes close to hinting at what he had seen that had such disastrous consequences: 'Why did I see anything? Why did I make my eyes guilty? Why was I so thoughtless as to harbour the knowledge of a fault? Unwitting was Actaeon when he beheld Diana unclothed; none the less he became the prey of his own hounds. Clearly, among the gods, even ill-fortune must be atoned for, nor is mischance an excuse when a deity is wronged. On that day when my ruinous mistake ravished me away, my house, humble but stainless, was destroyed...'

*cur aliquid vidi? cur noxis lumina feci?
cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?
inscius Actaeon vidit sine veste Dianam;
praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis.
scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,
nec veniam laeso numine casus habet.
illa nostra die, qua me malus absutlit error,
parva quidem periit, sed sine labe domus.*⁵

As Frazer says, 'on the strength of this passage some modern writers have suggested that Ovid may have accidentally witnessed an escapee of the Emperor's profligate granddaughter Julia, who was banished by Augustus in the same year as the poet. But this is a mere conjecture. Ovid kept the fatal secret locked up in his breast, and we shall never know it'.⁶ Another theory holds that Ovid was involved in the political and military plot, in the event quickly suppressed, to rehabilitate Agrippa Postumus, whose immorality and trouble-making had led Augustus to disinherit him, and have him condemned in A.D. 7 to perpetual exile on Planasia. This view probably derives from nothing more than a perceived similarity between the character and fate of Ovid and Agrippa. Involvement in a conspiracy would moreover count as a *scelus* and subject Ovid to a

⁴ *Tristia*, III.vi, 25-36, Wheeler, pp. 126-127.

⁵ *Tristia*, II.103-110; Wheeler, pp. 62-65.

⁶ *Ovid in six volumes, Fasti*, ed. and tr. J.G. Frazer, Loeb Classical Library, 2nd ed. revised by G.P. Gould, London, 1989, vol. VI, p. xvi.

more rigorous punishment, though one could deduce from his terminology that he merely observed a meeting of the conspirators.⁷ Again one might find here a parallel to theories concerning Sayat'-Nova, whom some have thought to have been implicated in Armenian nationalist movements influenced by Joseph Emin, though there is no evidence for that either.

As regards Julia, we have seen that similar conjectures have been made concerning Ana, Irakli's sister. She has no reputation for profligacy, but if she were involved in a relationship with Sayat'-Nova, even as the idealised 'mistress' of a troubadour, it could have been considered by some to be adulterous. Ovid's disgrace is unlikely to have stemmed immediately for something he had merely witnessed. When Ham saw the nakedness of Noah, no-one, including Moses, would have known of it had he not 'told his two brethren without' (*Genesis*, 9,22). It seems probable that Ovid's *stultitia* consisted in not keeping what he had seen to himself, that being of a demonstrably satirical turn of mind, and one whose business was words, he made some comment, perhaps ribald, at least indiscreet, upon it, at which the Emperor took grave offence. It may be that Sayat'-Nova impugned the honour of the Georgian royal family by pointing, in his poem *I cry Lalanin*, insufficiently cryptic, to a lady that the whole court (and subsequently modern writers in our own field) could be excused for identifying with Ana, the king's sister. Were she completely innocent of any reciprocation, of even the slightest interest in the poet's passion, it would still be a cause of embarrassment. Sayat'-Nova, too, in his mind's eye at least, had seen too much, and talked too much about it. He, too, never states specifically what his offence was. The 'things' (*sak'meni*) stemmed from his own 'cleverness' (*chkva*), literally paralleled by Ovid: *ingenio sic fuga parta meo* 'through that (poetry) my own wit has brought me exile'⁸ — and coincidentally also by a more modern poet, but one whose life overlapped with that of Sayat'-Nova, who was forced into a voluntary exile that led however to a striking episode in Anglo-Armenian literary relations, namely Lord Byron, who in his 1816 *Epistle to Augusta* wrote

*I have been cunning in my overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe.*

⁷ See the note by G.P. Gould to Wheeler's introduction to *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*, *op. cit.*, pp. xxiv-xxv. Gould holds that 'the notion that the *culpa* was not a serious matter seems an unwarranted paradox.'

⁸ *Tristia*, I.i.56; Wheeler, pp. 6-7.

The reasons for Byron's refuge abroad are only too well-known. Sayat'-Nova's 'cleverness', like Ovid's *ingenium*, is nothing but an antiphrasis for Ovid's freely proffered synonym *stultitia*; his astrological scapegoat, his 'black day', is Ovid's *fortuna*, or luck of the negative sort. The language that the Armenian and Roman poet use to deplore their fate is strikingly identical. Sayat'-Nova laments what has come upon his 'unhappy head'. Ovid laments, *venit in hoc illa fulmen ab arce caput* 'It was from that citadel (Caesar's house) that the bolt fell upon this head'.⁹ The mention of a horse by both poets constitutes a strange parallel: for Sayat'-Nova, being put in the stable with the horse is used as a contrast with his former courtly privileges, while, conversely, for Ovid it recalls his past glory as a knight:

*at, memini, vitamque meam moreque probabas
illo, quem dederas, praetereuntis equo.*

'And yet, I remember, thou wert wont to approve my life and my ways
when I passed before thee with the steed thou hadst granted me.'¹⁰

Wheeler suggests that whatever the pretext — and that word seems to be well used¹¹ — for Ovid's punishment, it was in the nature of a last straw. 'From the point of view of Augustus, the ruler and reformer, Ovid had been a nuisance for many years and had given fresh proof of his incorrigibility by making a fool of himself [cf. Sayat'-Nova, "You have made a laughing-stock of yourself in the eyes of the world"]. The thing was too much. "I am sick of this fellow", he decided. "Naviget!"'¹² This could well have been the attitude of Irakli II, also a reforming ruler, towards a poet who had had, perhaps himself made, trouble at his court, was not slow to publicise it in complaints to him, who had a satirical tongue that he had used against the Catholicos Anton, and was the singer of passionate love-songs that some might interpret as involving the royal family, if not, as one might surmise in the case of Ovid, in the mind of the Emperor at least, as encouraging young female princesses to harbour unhealthy thoughts. The abrupt nature of the minstrel's departure suggests something like a last straw. In what it consisted exactly is, as with Ovid, a mystery. The effect, however, was the same, and Sayat'-Nova might well have complained with his Roman counterpart, 'I must

⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 72; Wheeler, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Tristia*, II.89-90; Wheeler, pp. 62-63.

¹¹ G.P. Gould disagrees; see above, n. 7.

¹² Wheeler, p. xxiv.

continue to dwell at the edge of the world, a land far removed from my own':

*nobis habitabitur orbis
ultimus, a terra terra remota mea.*¹³

If one were of a suspicious turn of mind — and there would be some justification for developing one in the area of Caucasian studies — and were troubled by the absence of the 'O my unhappy head!' poem not only from the *Tetrak*, which includes no Georgian verse apart from that in the macaronic 'Poem in four languages', but from the manuscript written by Ioane, the poet's son, and were disquieted by the habit of Khelashvili, who does present a version of the poem, of 'teaching through jest', one might well think that if anyone wished to fake a Minstrel's Last Lament on being banished from the favour of the king, one could do far worse than go to Ovid's *Tristia* for inspiration. The present writer does not know how much of Ovid Georgians of the 18th century knew. One suspects very little, but if there were works by the poet that could be considered to have relevance to life on the confines of the Black Sea, then *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* would qualify. But the similarities between Ovid's and Sayat'-Nova's laments are more likely to be due to parallels that naturally exist between love poets of a satirical bent living in societies ruled by an all-powerful autocrat with high ideals and no lack of distant and unpleasant places suitable for rustication short of complete exile. There would therefore seem to be no solid grounds to offend previous critics, and to fail to follow Ovid's wise dictum, *acceptam parce movere fidem* 'Do not shake accepted belief.'¹⁴

It would not be right for one who looks at Sayat'-Nova through English eyes to neglect to mention with regard the end of his court career the parallel situation of an Anglo-Saxon minstrel who flourished a thousand years before him. Perhaps the parallel is not all that remarkable. The life a minstrel is much the same everywhere, and at all times. As 'Widsith' put it in the earliest extant poem in English, perhaps 7th-century, 'Thus I travelled through many foreign lands / over the wide earth [cf. Sayat'-Nova, 'I have travelled the whole world, not excluding Abyssinia].¹⁵ I experienced there / both good and evil; parted from my family, / far from my kindred, I served far and wide. So I can sing and tell my story,

¹³ *Tristia*, I.i.127-128; Wheeler, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴ *Fasti*, ed. tr. J.G. Frazer, p. 202.

¹⁵ *T'amam ashkharh pētut ēka, ch'ē t'oghi Habash, nazani*, T p. 124, I fol. 66, H p. 51.

/ declare before the company in the banqueting-hall [the meġlis] / how men of high rank were nobly generous to me ... / Roving thus, as is their destiny, wander / mankind's minstrels over many lands; / they tell their needs, they speak words of thanks. / Always, south or north, they find someone / appreciative of poetry, bountiful in gifts, / who wishes to exalt his fame among his retinue...'16 Irakli II of Georgia cannot fail to fall into place. But it is the poet called Deor, possibly 8th or 9th century, who suffered a similar fate to that of Sayat'-Nova. After recounting several major Teutonic disasters, he declares, 'For a while I was minstrel to the Heodenings, / dear to my prince. My name was Deor. / I had for many winters a goodly office, / a gracious lord, until now Heorrenda, / a man skilled in song, has received the status / which the ruler of men formerly gave to me.'17 It does not seem to be the case, however, that Sayat'-Nova was passed over for someone else: if so, he has remained in obscurity, like those appointed to Elisabeth I's court in preference to Dowland. On the other hand, 47, the probable age of Sayat'-Nova when dismissed from court, is an age at which poetic fantasy can fail. The philosophic Deor (if in fact he was a real person rather than a theme for a minstrel whose name we do not know in a pessimistic mood) purports to accept his lot with resignation with the refrain, *þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg* 'That passed over, so may this'. This was not Sayat'-Nova's mood at the time. But no doubt he, too, who had seen that 'this world will not remain with us', bowed to fate. Since he lived, as a priest, for probably another thirty-six years, he had time in which to do so. He could, however, console himself as another Old English predecessor had: 'He has less sad longing who knows many lays / or in his hands can take up the harp. / He has the gift of music that God gave to him'.18

¹⁶ *The Exeter Book*, part II, poem xi, vv. 50-56, 135-40, ed. W.S. Mackie, Early English Text Society, Original Series, no. 194, (1934), 1958, pp. 18, 24. Widsith, 'Wide Travel', is at best a pseudonym for one who claimed to have visited Huns, Goths, Swedes, Geats, South Danes, Vandals, Vikings, Gepids, Wends, Angles (foreigners for this 'Anglo'-Saxon Old Englishman, of course), Swabians, (Continental) Saxons, Thuringians, Burgundians, Franks, Frisians, Romans, Saracens, Serings (Chinese? Central Asians?), Greeks, Finns, Romans (in particular Caesar), Scots, Picts, Sliding-Finns, Bretons, Lombards, Israelites, Hebrews (a fine distinction here), "Assyrians" (*Exiringum*, Syrians perhaps), Indians, Egyptians, Medes, Persians, etc., claims which enhance *The Seafarer's Tale*, *ibid.*, no. ix, as a model of veracity. His poem has great literary merit, but it would not be unfair to consider 'Widsith' the earliest recorded English 'wide boy'.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, poem no. xviii, vv. 35-42. See above, p. 124 n. 23.

¹⁸ *Longað þonne þy læs þe him con leopa worn / opþe mid hondum con herpan gretan: / hafap him his gliwes giefþe þe him God sealde*, *Gnomic verses*, 169-171, *ibid.*, p. 44.

Although it is possible that some Azeri poems were composed in Sayat'-Nova's final year 1759 as court minstrel, none bears a date later than 1758, a year, as we have seen, for some reason particularly rich in compositions in that language; it is possible that they had to do with the court only in a negative sense, in that the minstrel may have been obliged to perform them elsewhere. None of the extant Georgian songs bears a date at all, apart from that dated 1751 by Ioane in 1823, though from internal evidence we can ascribe some of the most important poems in this language to 1759, and possibly later. The dated 1759 poems, six in number, all in Armenian, and comprising some of the poet's most celebrated odes, are thus of poignant significance.

Two of the 1759 poems are dated by year and month: *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats* 'Your form is (as a picture) drawn by a pen' of the end of March 1759,¹⁹ and *Ashkharës me p'anjara ê* 'This world is a cage' of the beginning of April.²⁰ Although the latter is thus the last poem to be accurately dated by the poet, we cannot say that it was actually his last Armenian work, since the remaining four poems that bear no indication of the month of their recital or composition have to be ranged with them, and though we can say that there is unlikely to be any room to place any between the end of March and the beginning of April, the poet's average for his best attested year 1758 being two poems a month, it is impossible to tell whether any is to be placed before or after. Only one of the 1759 poems seems at all optimistic, namely that in praise of his violin, *Amen sazi mech'ën govats, dun t'amam tasn is, k'amanch'a* 'Praised among all instruments, you are a perfect ten, O k'amanch'a',²¹ a

¹⁹ T p. 129, the Georgian annotation in the right margin reading *K' ese diba u iengi dunis hangshi arut'inas martis gasuls k'ks*. UMZ 'This (was recited) in the "Brocade and New World" mode by Arut'in at the end of March 447 of the chronicon'; I fol. 66A, his footnote in Georgian reading, *Ese mukham(a)zi aris* 'This is a mukhammas'; if Ioane understands by this the usual APT meaning of 'verse of five lines' (S), he has miscounted; if he means a poem consisting of five stanzas, as he normally seems to use the word, he reproduces only four of them.

²⁰ T p. 133, the Georgian annotation at the end reading, *K' ese arut'inas nat'k'omi aprilis damdegs k'ks*. UMZ '(By the divinity of) Christ, this was recited by Arut'in at the beginning of April 447 of the chronicon'; I fol. 63 A, his Georgian footnote reading, *Ese diakh kargi mukhamazia somkhureb saiat'novis nat'k'omi* 'This is a very good mukhamazi (in) Armenian-verses recited by Sayat'-Nova'. H pp. 7 and 70 respectively.

²¹ T p. 134, the Georgian annotation reading, *K' ese artu'in{n}ja(s) nat'k'omi k'ks*. UMZ '(By the divinity of) Christ, this was recited by Arut'in 447 of the chronicon'; I fol. 70A, his Georgian annotation reading, *Ese saiat'novas t'avisi saqvareli da dzvip'asi mamali* [for mameuli?] *k'amanch'a rom uk'ia mukhamazis khmazed at'argmnisot' galiba ch'umvisa* (?) *magalit'ebi gakhlays* 'This is (concerning) Sayat'-Nova's own beloved and

metaphor which incidentally illustrates Sayat'-Nova's, and the eventual priest Step'anos's, passion for numbers. His son Ioane refers to this 'beloved and highly-priced (or highly-prized) violin as *mamali*, by which he must mean *mameuli* 'paternal', which is unlikely to mean that it belonged to Sayat'-Nova's father Karapet, but either that it belonged to Ioane's father, i.e. Sayat'-Nova himself, or, as a national instrument, to their Armenian forefathers. It is most clearly represented as an expensive instrument:

*Angachēt êrtsat'ên piti, gēlukhēt javahir k'arats.
kut'ēt shirmayemên piti, p'urēt sadap'ov naqsh arats.
simēt oskên k'ashats piti, erkat'ēt p'anjara arats.
och'ov qimet'ēt ch'i giti,²² lal u almasn is, k'amanch'a.*

'Your neck must be of silver, your head inlaid with jewels,
Your neck of ivory, your belly decorated with mother-of-pearl,
Your strings plated with gold, your spike filigreed.
No-one will know your price, you are rubies and diamonds, violin!'

His violin enlivens many like a bright light, and lulls others to sleep like a drug (*Shatin zart'un ku lusatz'nis, shatin ku k'ēnetz'nis bangov*). It makes two men of its player (*atsoghit erku ku shinis*). It makes the sad heart merry, it cures the sick man's palsy (*Shat tēkhur sirt ku khēndatz'nis, ku kētris hivēndi doghēn*). He urges it to fulfil the requests of the people, so that they may say, 'Long live he who plays you!' (*Khalkhin es ilt'imazn ara, asin, Apri k'u atsoghin*). As long as Sayat'-Nova has his health, the violin will see great things (*K'ani sagh ê Sayat'-Nova, shat ban ku tesnis, k'amanch'a*). It is, however, in the very first stanza, that there is a hint of danger:

highly-priced paternal k'amanch'a which he has praised in the form of a five-stanza poem; for its interpretation most probably unspoken allegories are present.' Ioane's Georgian style being considerably more obscure than that of his father, and deviating from that of textbooks, this translation is tentative, making the following assumptions: *mamali*, normally 'male, cockerel', is to be read as *mameuli* 'paternal, belonging to a father'; *khma-*, usually 'mode', here 'form'; *at'argmnisot'*, read **a-t'argmn-isa-d*, the -*o-* representing a broad pronunciation of -*a-*, the construction being the genitive of the verb/noun *t'argmni* followed by the final marker -*d* (cf. Vogt, *Grammaire de la langue géorgienne*, Oslo, 1971, p. 37, for a parallel construction of *is(a) + -(a)d* forming a case unknown to ancient Georgian); *galiba*, T *galiba* 'most probably, possibly'; *ch'umvisa* (?) *magalit'ebi*, lit. 'allegories of silence' (?) (D. Ch'ubinashvili lists *ch'umoba* 'to be silent', but not *ch'umva*). H pp. 5-6. A translation into English verse, dedicated to the memory of the violinist Manug Parikian (1920-1987), 'Of all the strings by men caressed', may be found in *Raft*, vol. 2, 1989, pp. 9-10.

²² T; I *ch'e khabar*.

Nak'az mart'(ēn) k'iz ch'i tesni,²³ dun nēra pasn is, k'amanch'a.
qast ara, ēl lav ôreru êdivēn hasnis, k'amanch'a.
k'iz indznitz' ov kana khēli, ashughi basn is, k'amanch'a.

'The low (P *nakas*) fellow will not see you, for him you are something that brings no monetary gain,²⁴ k'amanch'a.

Make an effort, you will see more good days hereafter, k'amanch'a.

Who can wrench you from me? You are the minstrel's bass string, k'amanch'a.'

Sayat'-Nova's poem *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice', and Irakli's own criticism of his nobles related by Joseph Emin, to which we have referred above, show that there were many Philistines at the Georgian court who could have made life miserable for the poet. But here he seems content merely to call such a one a low fellow with no appreciation of the higher things in life, an *amouso*. The poem seems optimistic enough. Why should one think that the poet feared that his precious violin might have been wrenched from him, that he would have to make a special effort to continue to see good days? It is not only that, with hindsight, we know what was to befall him before 1759 was out, and of which, as we have said above, he seems to have had a premonition in the preceding year. The annotation that his son Ioane appends to the poem has its grammatical obscurities, but one thing is clear: he suspects that the poem contains *magalit'ebi*, a word (*magalit'i*) that he elsewhere uses as a synonym for *igavi*, *t'ejnisi*, that is, 'allegory'. It seems that he does not believe his father's description of his violin is to be taken literally, but is more likely meant to show in what a golden light he saw it in his imagination. This may be because Ioane is not aware of ever having seen such a splendid instrument. In the fuller version of his 1759 or later Georgian ode *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head'²⁵ his father says his instrument is made of wood (*ch'emi chianuri khisagan aris*). Or is the 'beautiful instrument from Europe' (*sap'ranget'is turp'a*

²³ Thus with Hasrat'yan, who points out (p. 333), that the hemistich in T has one syllable too many (*nak'az mart' k'iz ch'i kana tesni*), while I's metrically regular verse (*nak'az mart' ch'i karogh tesne*) omits the specific reference to the violin (*k'iz* 'thee'). The *k'iz* is not essential, since the *dun* of the second hemistich quickly makes clear what it is that is not seen; but the *Tetrak* must, as in general, be given precedence over Ioane's text: it includes *k'iz*, and the verse should be regularised.

²⁴ The meaning of *Az pās* 'a man who earns no money, without money' (Äzizbäy), seems here the most appropriate; the meaning could also be 'on you he passes' (*Az pās* also 'a pass (in a game)', *pās demāk* 'to pass'; cf. T *buna pes* 'it's beyond me, it passes my comprehension, it's the limit' (Hony)).

²⁵ B pp. 76-77.

sazi) that ‘they had made’ (*gamart’es*) the one he describes in the present poem? As a court minstrel he could well have received by the bounty of the King an expensive instrument upon which to perform, and which could have provoked the eulogy here. One can be fairly sure, however, that such a valuable object would be indeed withdrawn, ‘wrenched from (his) hands’, on his dismissal, leaving him with his old wooden fiddle. As were the colourful silks and satins of his court minstrel’s robes, which he was forced to exchange, as he laments in the shorter version of the Georgian poem, for the ‘black mourning weeds’ of the priest’s *soutane*:

alisp’eris kabit’ ganshvenebuli
*akhla ama dzadzit’ gashavebuli.*²⁶

‘With highly decorated scarlet robes,
 But now with blackened rags.’

It may be with hindsight that Ioane finds his father’s Ode to his Violin most probably (*galiba*) allegorical. Not many commentators — I myself know of none — pay any attention to his view. The poem seems remarkably free of puns, the obvious one being in the first stanza where the poet says that his *k’emanch’a* is the minstrel’s *bas*, which word can be read straightforwardly as Arm. *bas* = *bamb* ‘the lowest string of an instrument’ (Malkhasyantz’), therefore here a metaphor for solid support, or as Turkish *bâs* (A *ba’th*, P *ba’s*) ‘mission, divine mission, revelation, resurrection’ (Redhouse), ‘stirring up, raising the dead’ (Steingass), both interpretations laudatory. Perhaps the poem does reflect the light and joy that the instrument brings, in his own words, to the poet’s sad heart. But it is light amid the encircling gloom, for the rest of the 1759 poems contain few rays of hope. Psychologically, one would be tempted to place this poem at the beginning of the year, were it not that the human mind is not too closely subject to the passage of the earth round the sun. The poem is full of hope, but that, as Aristotle says, is a ‘waking dream’.²⁷ Was it perhaps brought on by an indulgence in the *bhang* that the poet mentions. For Sayat’-Nova seems here, untypically, even unnaturally, for him, too full of confidence. His optimism seems like whistling in the dark, which will soon engulf his dreams in cold reality. His beloved *k’amanch’a* will in fact know no future days of glory, and no-one of importance will call any more on its player to perform.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

²⁷ ἐγρηγορότος ἐνύπνιον, *cit.* Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, v. 18.

The ode of the end of March, *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats* 'Your form is (as a picture) drawn by a (master's) pen' is mainly an enthusiastic paean in praise of the beloved's beauty, expressed in typical Oriental hyperboles.²⁸ It is such that it will restore the dying to life:

mirnoghën k'izmen ku aîrê anmahakan digh, dighi pês.

'The dying will take from you an immortal drug, as a medicine.'

Her beauty is also expressed in musical terms:

Batz'vil is karmir vart'i pês, bêlbuli hid hang is anum

'You have opened like a crimson Rose, with the Nightingale you harmonise.'

Ip' tighemet zhazh is gali, shëkhshëkhkum is jighjighi pês.

'When you move from your place, you jingle like a string of coins.'

She has entry to the court:

Ip' mètnum is mejlisumën, shang shukhi-shabang is anum

'When you enter the mejlis, you bring jollity and mirth.'

There is no suggestion in the poem that the lady is of high rank. Indeed, by being represented as harmonising with the Nightingale, it looks as though she could be a dancer. The image of the minstrel serenading the dancer is familiar to everyone who has attended a Caucasian *soirée musicale* of a popular sort. This time it is not Sayat'-Nova tossed as a little bark on the ocean of love: the nautical image is used to emphasise the beloved's grace:

Ashkhark'ën tsov, dun mech'ën nav — man is gali, lang is anum

'The world is an ocean, you are a ship upon it — you sail and sway.'

But, of course, the waves will carry Sayat'-Nova, unable to resist her love, away:

Bas k'u êshkhën vuntz' dimanam, jurën tanê Sayat'-Novin

'Say, how shall I resist your love, let the waters bear Sayat-Nova off!'

Anyone who beholds the beloved a second time, will be driven mad:

T'e tesnoghët mek êl tesav, divana-dabang is anum

'If he who beholds you sees you again, you drive him raving mad.'

²⁸ A commentary on this poem, 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', with a verse translation in English, may be found in *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 22-36, and the omitted literal translation in *Raft*, vol. 2, 1988.

The poem is an excellent example of its genre. There seems no reason to take its sentiments at all seriously. Which is saying the same thing. One could conclude that any serious trouble that afflicted the poet in 1759 was, at the end of March, still to come.

Already at the beginning of April, however, things look blacker. In *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê* 'This world is a cage'²⁹ there is not one happy line. He who takes the world seriously will get hurt, and the poet is fed up with his wounds:

Mëtik tēvoghēn ku khutz'vi. dagherumen bezaril im.

Fortune is no respecter of persons, as she goes a-hunting:

*Dovlat'ēn eit'ibar ch'unê, ip'or k'ert'a ir shēk'arov.*³⁰

He is a clever fellow, who can preserve his self-esteem in this world:

Lav mart'ēn ên ê, glukhēn pahê ashkharumēs eit'ibarov

'He is a good man, (who can) keep his head³¹ in esteem in this world.'

The honest simple fellow is doomed:

Hum kat'nakir at'ami zat' — nalat' ili êt ku bap'in!

'Son of the raw milk drinking man — a curse be upon your loyalty!³²

In any case, this world is only transient, he tells us twice over:

Ashkharēs miz mēnalū ch'ê, imastnasiratz' khabarov.

'This world will not remain with us, according to what philosophers report' (st. 2, v. 3);

Ashkharēs miz mēnalū ch'ê, k'ani nēstink' zogh u sap'in

'This world will not remain with us, however long we sit amid pleasures and delights.' (st. 4, v. 1)

With the help of God a man might survive the ups and downs of this world:

Astēdzu dziřumēn hisht ê mart'u ashkhark' ēlumutēn

But one's path does not run straight, and the people's falsehoods have multiplied:

Ghurt'ēs ēndur chanp'a ch'ê gnum, shatařil ê khalkhi sutēn.

²⁹ See above, n. 20. I's many variants are given here only when important.

³⁰ T; I *urshk'arov*. H p. 70, not recognising APTAz *shikâr* 'hunt, hunting, prey, victim, booty' (Hony), arbitrarily amends to an unintelligible *urush-k'arov*.

³¹ T *glukh* 'head' being here used like Georgian *t'av* 'head, self', I having indeed *uran* 'himself' (standard *iren*).

³² T *bap'in*, APT *wafâ*, Az *vâfa*; I *babin*, probably interpreted as *baba* 'grandfather'.

Today is worse than yesterday, and one is tired of expecting anything better tomorrow:

Êreg lav êr kantz' êsôr. vagherumen bezaril im.

There is little work to be had, and the aristocracy is a disappointment:

K'ësanën me ghul ch'in pahum — agherumen bezaril im

'Twenty do not keep one servant — I am fed up with agha's.'

The poet has lost patience. He cannot cope with people's slander, and his friends have become his enemies:

Hamp'irut'inës hatil ê, ch'im dimanum khalkhi gap'in.

Dostirës dushman in da'i, iagherumen bezaril im.

'My patience is exhausted, I no longer counter the people's gossip.
My friends have become enemies, I am tired of adversaries.'

He wants to fly like the Nightingale, but away from the gardens of which he has had enough:

Guzim t'ërçh'i bëlbuli pês — bagherumen bezaril im.

His own troubles have multiplied like a raging stream:

Sayat'-Nova asatz', Dardës kantz' mecharën³³ shataz' il ê.

There will be no sweet triumph awaiting him tomorrow; today's anxieties have multiplied:

Ch'unim vaghvan k'aghtz'ër p'ark'ës. himi darën shataz' il ê.

He weeps like the Nightingale, for his Rose has grown more thorns:

Bëlbuli pês êndur gu lam, vart'is kharën shataz' il ê.

They will not permit it to flower. He is tired of those who pluck it away:

Ch'in t'oghum vakhtin batz' velu — k'agherumen bezaril im.

Even if one did not know that 1759 was a disastrous year for Sayat'-Nova, it would be hard to take this pessimistic poem for a literary exercise divorced of any reality. Sayat'-Nova has lamented before, but not as bitterly as this. One is surely justified in interpreting the poem to mean

³³ T *k'andzme charn*. This has caused every commentator hitherto great trouble, but clearly APT *majârî* (pl. of *majrâ*) 'streams, currents, river-banks', used figuratively as 'accidents, events, occurrences' (S), is meant, floods being a common image in the poet's work; the singular is attested in Azeri *mäjra* 'bed of a river' (Äzizbây: one suspects it means more than that). I *minbarn* 'the minbar, pulpit in a mosque', useful only as showing that obscurity set in early.

that, by the beginning of April 1759, the poet has become the object of popular gossip, that he feared for his livelihood, that his friends turned against him, at least to the extent of giving him unpalatable advice maybe. *They* have forbidden *his* Rose, his beloved, whoever she may be, to blossom for him, and have plucked her away prematurely, perhaps to give to another. Of one thing there was to be no possible doubt: tomorrow would witness no triumphs on his part, and would be worse than any of his yesterdays.

More than any other poem of Sayat'-Nova, 'This world is a cage' is rich in social comment. In Georgian he has declared that he is a peasant bound to the land (*me glekhi var mitsashe daskhali*), a peasant, he repeats, with no wish to be a noble (*me glekhi var, t'avadoba ar minda*).³⁴ This does not mean that he was contented with his lot: a man of genius and sensitivity, though he may try to make the best of it, cannot congratulate Dame Fortune on her choice, if one can call her arbitrary selection that, of favourites, as she goes a-hunting, as Sayat'-Nova has put it. Such a man's disappointment is often betrayed by protesting too much:

*Let those who are in favour with their stars
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlooked for, joy in that I honour most.*

says Shakespeare to his young aristocratic patron, the Earl of Southampton, in Sonnet 25. Sayat'-Nova, who was not to be granted the titles of nobility, a coat of arms *Non sans droit*, is aware that he remains at the bottom of the social heap, threatened with unemployment in a deteriorating society in which, as he puts it, with hyperbole doubtless, one in twenty gentlemen (*aghas*) alone keeps a servant, by which he probably means a personal musician. There is even a hint of rebellion in his invocation of a curse upon the loyalty of the ordinary good-living man, content with raw milk as peasants are, not hankering after the fine wines of his betters. For, as William Goodwin has abundantly shown, there is much to be read into moods and tenses. Sayat'-Nova does not say, 'There is a curse upon the loyalty' of such a one, in which case he would have used the indicative *ê* 'is' or *kě-li* 'will be'³⁵ (possibly equivalent to

³⁴ *Samart'ali miqav*, B p. 17, st. 2, v. 2, and *Damekhseni*, B p. 21, st. 1, v. 5, respectively.

³⁵ As in st. 1 v. 2 of *Ajab k'u sirtēn ov shinitz'*.

Western Armenian *k'ëllay*, Turkish *olur*). He says, 'Let there be (*ili*) a curse upon that loyalty of yours!' Why? Marx would have an answer, and it would have to do with the breaking of chains. Whether Sayat'-Nova would have gone so far as to advocate anything like that, despite the hopes of Soviet critics, is very doubtful. But that he saw that the ordinary man's loyalty to a defective society brought no returns, not even the esteem he twice in the poem shows to be elusive, is beyond any doubt. And in the same Sonnet, Shakespeare has forshadowed the fate of Sayat'-Nova, who was already aware of the ephemeral nature of his own fair leaves:

*Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigold at the sun's eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.*

The third Armenian ode of 1759 we shall consider, though it is not possible to determine the exact chronological order within the year, the month of its composition or recital not being given, *Bedaslin vur khosetz'ënis* 'For the ill-bred (fellow) that you bring to speak',³⁶ begins with a verse that clearly underlines the social distance between his beloved and himself, *bedasl* being a Persian loan, *bad-asl*, that unambiguously means 'of a bad stock or a mean race, base-born, ill-bred' (Steingass). Against this accusation, the poet, produce what gems from the mine of his genius he might, is powerless:

Bedaslin vur khosetz'ënis, lal anilën inch'in ê shah?

'For the ill-bred fellow that you bring to speak, what profit is there in producing rubies?'

For *lal* must mean that (APT *la'l*, Az *lä'l* 'ruby'), in the sense of 'jewels of speech', rather than Arm *lal* 'to weep', as Akhverdyan, reading *latz' linel*, has interpreted it: such an interpretation ('what profit has he in weeping') would require *lalis*, accusative of the collective (plural) *lalik'*, and the following verses show that rubies fit better in a context in which the poet, far from weeping, boasts of what fine things he brings (crimson, songs, gems), even if the penultimate verse shows him in tears. Hasrat'yan, rejecting 'weeping', opts for PTaz *lâl* 'dumb';³⁷ but the idiom is TAz *lal olmaq* 'be dumb' (Äzizbäy), not **lal etmäk*, which *lal*

³⁶ T p. 136 (*K'ks UMZ* 'chronicon 447', A.D. 1759), I fol. 67 (*ese mukhamazia* 'This is a poem of five stanzas'); H p. 61.

³⁷ For Akhverdyan's and Hasrat'yan's own interpretation, see H p. 247, note to (Armenian) no. 44.

anil would suppose. And when at this time could Sayat'-Nova be accused of being dumb? Certainly not in this poem.

The following verse has some ambiguity:

Řangěn vur sevaden něngni, al anilěn inch'in ê shah?

'He whose colour has fallen into blackness, what profit has he in making scarlet?'

AP *sawâd* (Sayat'-Nova's form suggests **sawâda*^h, not in the dictionaries) means 'black colour' basically, and points, though the form is not listed by Redhouse or Äzizbäy as occurring in Turkish and Azeri, to T *kara* 'black, ill-omened', *yüzünü karası* 'blackness of the face', 'source of shame to one' (Hony), Az *qara adam* 'black man', 'a man of simple origins' (Äzizbäy), T *karayüzlü* 'shameless, depraved' (Hony). That must certainly be the principal meaning of the verse: the poet has been put to shame, 'blackened', so what use is there in producing poems as bright as scarlet? AP *sawâd* can also mean, however, 'sable raiment, mourning habiliments', and in the expression *sawâdu-l-qalb*, 'blackness of heart, love, original sin'. Is there a reference here to the hated black garments for which he must exchange his scarlet robes, as he laments in his Georgian 'O my unhappy head!'³⁸ Probably at this time not wittingly, only as a premonition, as our hindsight allows us to suppose. But the image seems connected with the dyeing trade, as that in the fourth verse of this first stanza:

Patank'in mi řangn ê herik, ch'al anilěn inch'in ê shah?

'One colour suffices for a winding-sheet: what profit is there in dyeing it in variegated hues?'

Of course, one cannot judge inner worth by outward appearance:

Řangěn řangerun tsatskum ê, hujrek'ěn lik'n ê sademen.

'The (one) colour masks (other) colours: the jewel-case is full of (gems-of-) pure(-water).'

And it is not only that a simple colour conceals things of great worth. Rich colours can cover something very ordinary — a dig at the peacocks of the court, as well as perhaps a rueful comment on his own condition:

T'eguz zar zarbab hak'tz'ėnis, vur ch'ėli asiljademen.

'Though you dress (him) in gold and brocade, that will not make (anyone) of gentle birth.'

³⁸ See above, n. 26.

As one at least cognisant of the weaving or dyeing trade, Sayat'-Nova would have regretted that he did not know of the English proverb, 'You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear', and had to make do with the racialistic

Siv arabi chakti vëra khal anilën inch'in ê shah?

'On a negro's forehead, what use is there to place a beauty-spot?'

Though the opportunity to introduce again the colour of black, with a suggestion of *T alhn qarasi* 'blackness of the forehead', 'shame, misfortune' (Redhouse), was surely welcome.

The world is basically good, not always so perceived by philosophers, and he will enjoy it most who lives the good life:

Lav mart'n ên ê, sirov anê bari hrishtakneru kamk'ën.

Imastunnirë ch'ë tesan ês ashkharhis hutn u hamk'ën.

'The good man is he who lovingly fulfils the wishes of the good angels. (Mere) philosophers have not perceived the scent and savour of this world.'

The poet betrays his regret that he has not had a better education, owing to poverty:

Mart' piti t'ang hakh ta. arnê khoskirën p'ir ustademen.

'A man must pay dear if he would hear the words of old masters.'

Not that there is any sense in pursuing riches. The world, again, is transient:

Ashkharës miz mënalü ch'ê, mal anilën inch'in ê shah?

'This word will not remain with us. What profit is there in amassing property?'

Indeed, is there any use in doing anything, unless one has the luck and the grace of God of Ornan (the poet, relying on his memory, has confused the farmer of *1 Chronicles* 21,15 ff. with Uriel of *1 Chronicles* 15,11, telescoping their names), and can sell one's threshing-floor for a high price to King David, to be used as an altar to the Lord?

Vur ch'ê Urnieli nëman, kal anilën inch'in ê shah?

'For him who is not like Urniel, what use is it to make a threshing-floor?'

This can only mean that there is little profit in being what the poet has often enough claimed to be, a peasant, a land-worker, another pessimistic comment on his contemporary society. There is much misery around, and Satan triumphs in his evil temptations:

*Mer u manuk bazhanvetz'an, manukn êndur uni lalû.
Satanen me danb ê dëri³⁹ At'ami zat'ën vursalu.
Shatën Satanen ê tanum, virch'ën mënum ê Vay talu.*

'Mother and child are parted: the child has reason to weep.
Satan has set a snare to trap the sons of Adam.
Satan carries many off: the last remain to cry, "Alas!"'

There is no comfort for the poet. His beloved neglects him:

Mart' vur k'u khoskov me'ani, gal anilën inch'in ê shah?

'For a man who dies by a word from you, what use is it to make things-of-great worth?'⁴⁰

He is a poor man, ill-dressed, of no account:

Um hak'in⁴¹ hin shal in tesnum, êl ch'in asum, t'e ês ov a?

'When they see one clothed in an old shawl, they no longer say, Who is this one?'

There is that gulf between his beloved and himself, at whose affair the Heavens stand amazed:

*Shur'êrit ch'arkhi-i p'alagën, dovlat'ën miznitz' khe'rov a ...
Iarovët mek mëhlam ch'unis, êndur gu las, Sayat'-Nova.*

'The wheel of the heavens has turned: Fate is confused by us.
You have no balsam in your beloved [*i.e.* our love is no soothing balm?]:
for that you weep, Sayat'-Nova.'

There is no medical cure for what the poet suffers, and none that fortune-telling will reveal:

Jerek'ën dighët ch'in gidi, p'al anilën inch'in ê shah?

'The surgeons know no cure for you: what use is there to resort to divination?'

For the non-superstitious, this final question may appear a descent into bathos. But it is more than a quaint insight into a society that indulged in

³⁹ T; *I tar'ê gordzi* 'has fabricated a perch', *i.e.* a trap with as it were bird-lime'.

⁴⁰ *gal anilën* 'to make *gal*' is obscure, but it must mean something of value equivalent to making rubies, scarlet, and variegated dyes, possibly therefore APT *ghalâ* 'dearness, high price' (R), the Turkish pronunciation of which is given by Hony as *galâ*; although Armenian and Georgian have the sound and character *gh*, no word is listed by Äzizbäy as beginning with this consonant, and this particular word is absent from his dictionary; the final *-â* could well be ignored by Sayat'-Nova, as in *agh(-er)* for *aghâ*. On the same principles, APT *ghâlî* 'dear, costly, precious, highly-priced', which is cognate, is possible.

⁴¹ T; *I hak'ni* 'dresses himself'.

fâl, by which the Persians usually mean taking an omen from the poems of Hâfiz. The Emperor Heraclius sought guidance by bibliomancy practised on the Scriptures. Many Christians turn in periods of stress to these for guidance, and we know that in 1766 Sayat'-Nova, now the priest Step'an, copied out at Kakhi the wisdom literature ascribed to Solomon. It is possible that, in this crisis in his life that was to have such disastrous consequences, Sayat'-Nova literally turned to bibliomancy. Not, however, with great success.

One cannot but note, in this poem composed in his final year as court minstrel, the many metaphors formed around textiles and colours — brocade, winding-sheet, shawl, handkerchief, scarlet, variegated dyes. We have seen how Omar Khayyâm looked back to the days when he was what his name indicates, a tent-maker. Old men dream of their youth, and those who fear imminent death see, it is said, their lives pass before their mind's eye. Are these images of Sayat'-Nova part of a retrospective survey of the early path that has led to his present position, i.e. do they mean that he was indeed, as many think, a former weaver or dyer?⁴²

The two remaining poems in Armenian dated 1759 are both laments of unrequited love. This is Sayat'-Nova's principal theme. Already in 1752, in what is perhaps his most often performed song, *Bēlbuli hid latz' is ēli* 'With the Nightingale you, too, weep',⁴³ this is expressed in heart-rending terms:

Dardēs asim, gu lan sarir.
Ēs inch' ban êr, vur dun arir.
Sayat'-Novun junun arir,
Junun arir.
Ch'ēka k'izi nēman, ch'ēka k'izi nēman,
Dun is annēman.

'If I tell of my agony, the mountains weep.
 What is this thing you have done (to me)?
 You have driven Sayat'-Nova mad,
 Driven him mad.
 There is no-one like you, there is no-one like you.
 You are incomparable.'

⁴² See Chapter One, p. 8-11.

⁴³ T p. 119, the Georgian annotation reading *K' ese belir qap'is hangshi t'aslibi osmalis mughami k'ks. UM mart' gasuls* '(By the divinity of) Christ, this taslib in the *belir qapi* mode, Ottoman mugham, 440 of the chronicon, at the end of March.' H pp. 8-9.

Few would take this melodious song literally. Indeed, one wonders whether one can take any such poem to reflect the present agony of the lover. Love's joy, *Liebesfreud*, perhaps. Chagrin d'amour, *Liebesleid*, is more likely to be an emotion remembered in tranquillity, when the pain has passed. It may, however, be different in the case of a poet like Sayat'-Nova, who all his life has been able to conjure love-songs out of his sleeve. The form of the poem has become second nature to him. It is not difficult for him to inject into it the gall of truth. The 1759 poems seem to be of such a mixture.

The two said remaining poems, *Ajab k'u sirtën ov shinitz' khonaritz'* 'Did he who made your heart sink down',⁴⁴ and *Indz u im sirekan iarin me tari berats gitenak'* 'May ye know that one year brought me and my beloved',⁴⁵ are both in sentiment fairly conventional. The former begins with a powerful image that recalls that of William Blake on the creation of the tiger:

*And what shoulder, and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?*

*Ajab k'u sirtën ov shinitz', khonaritz', hizniz'*⁴⁶ *bedamagh?*

'Did he who made thy heart sink down, depressed by the rafters?'

⁴⁴ Not in the *Tetrak* as now constituted, Akhverdyan says that the leaf he has at his disposal (where is it now?) is torn down one side, presumably at the bottom, since it is st. 5 that has the lacunae; Hasrat'yan, who fills them in, represents the folio as bearing the annotation 'Said (by Arut'in), 447 of the chronicon' (pp. 60, 247). Ioane, fol. 68, who omits st. 3, has a full but divergent version of Akhverdyan's st. 5, his own st. 4; since Hasrat'yan, who rightly criticises G. Asatur for making some mistakes in his transcription, does not himself (p. 247) reproduce Ioane's text accurately, it may be useful to give it here: *Hasav garunk'van bulbulnirën gal ê uzum. / karmir u gulgaz a hak'i, sarvik'ën khakhal ê uzum. / Saiat'noven arantz' nëgir viz(ë) gëtz'atz' lal ê uzum. / Jar kortz'ërats khot'kari pes nstats a khazniz' bedamagh* 'The spring season has arrived, the Nightingale wants to come. He has put on crimson and scarlet, the cypresses want to dance. Sayat'-Nova without bending his neck wants to weep. / Like a sultan who has lost his army, he sits, by his (useless) treasure (or read T *khazân* 'disaster') depressed.'

⁴⁵ T p. 127, the Georgian annotation *K' esetz' diba u inegi* (for *iengi*) *duniis khmashi hangi qazali arut'inas nat'k'omi k'ks. UMZ* '(By the divinity of) Christ, this also in the mode *diba u yengi dūnya*, in the ghazal form, recited by Arut'in in 447 of the chronicon' (A.D. 1759). Not in Ioane. Hasrat'yan, p. 75.

⁴⁶ *hizniz'*, from *hizan*, lwd. from T *hezan* 'beam, rafter', itself borrowed from Armenian *hetsan* (probably in Western pronunciation *hedzan*) 'beam, rafter'. The Turkish loanword was heard in 1980 at Antakya by Kh. Gadčyan (cit. Kh. P. Amiryan, 'Hay-erenitz' p'okharyal bafere ardi t'urk'erenum' [Words in Modern Turkish borrowed from Armenian], *Merdzavor ev Mijin Arevelk'i erkrner ev zhoghovrdner*, XII, *T'urk'ia*, Ak. Nauk Arm. SSR, 1985, p. 149). One may assume that the word was in Azeri, though it is unlisted in dictionaries at my disposal, and that Sayat'-Nova borrowed it back into Armenian again. Hasrat'yan, Glossary, p. 296, derives it from a 'Persian' *higan* (sic) in

This is a reproach to the beloved, accused, as many before her and since, of possessing a heart too solidly built, too hard and resistant, for heavy rafters do not betoken one that is soft and tender. The constant refrain word *bedamagh* (P *bî-damâgh*) is best interpreted after the Azeri usage of *damaq* as 'good humour',⁴⁷ as in *damaqdan düşmək* 'lose one's good humour', *damaqlı* 'a joker, merry' (Äzizbäy) so that 'out of good humour, depressed' will suit the context. Its frequent recurrence emphasises that the poet is in the winter of his discontent, and we know that no glorious summer was to follow. As usual, the lover is unaware of the nature of the offence that has caused the beloved's discontent, which in turn crushed him like a grape:

Yar, is k'iz inch' get' im ari, nəstats is miznitz' bedamagh.
K'ametz'ir êshkhit manganov. is pitim k'iznitz' bedamagh.

'Beloved, what offence have I done you, that you sit there, by us depressed?
 You have squeezed me dry in the (wine-)press of your love. It is I who
 must be depressed by you.'

He should, being well-read, know better, but is powerless in the grip of his passion:

T'eguz imatzi, kart'atz'i imastnasiratz' arakën,
*Êshkhemet junun im êli, ver ekav sêrtis varakën.*⁴⁸

'Although I have read and understood the adages of the philosophers,
 I am grown mad for love of you, the leaf (-shaped clot of blood) has come
 up from my heart'⁴⁹

He is wounded by the dagger of his beloved's love, he is burned in the fire of her love, he is like a wounded gazelle. There is no reason to quote these verses, we have heard all that many times before. One beautiful

the meaning of 'beam, rafter', an unlikely form not in the usual dictionaries. For the image of the heart as an artefact, though on a smaller scale, cf. the West African (Duala) proverb, 'The casket of the heart is hard to open' (Die Herzenskiste ist schwer zu öffnen), *cit. E. Lips, op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁴⁷ The basic meaning in Azeri is 'palate' (nëbo). For Turkish usage Redhouse lists i.a. '(one's) health'. *damâgh* in the original Persian means basically 'brains', so *bî-damâgh* 'without brains, without pride', 'brainless, ill-tempered, irritable, testy, impatient', S.

⁴⁸ Akhverdyan, Hasrat'yan; I *akh k'ashelen sirtës ervatz', veretz'av sêrtis varaqën* 'From sighing sighs my heart burned, the leaf of my heart was wounded'. The first hemistichs of both versions are trite: for Ioane's, cf. *Indz u im sirekan iarin* (a poem not in I), st. 1, v. 2, *Akh k'ashelen sêrtis mech'ën arunën merats gitenak'* 'From sighing sighs you may know that the blood in my heart's core has died', H p. 75.

⁴⁹ APT *waraq*, i.a. 'blood dropping from a wound, making a round or leafy figure on the ground' (S). Cf. German *Herzblatt* 'sweetheart'?

pair of verses would permit us to date this poem to the spring of 1759. In Ioane's version⁵⁰

Hasav garunk'van vakhtēn bulbulnirēn gal ē uzum.

Karmir u gulgaz a hak'i, sarvik'ēn khakhal ē uzum.

'The time of spring has come, the Nightingales wish to come.

It has clad itself in crimson and scarlet, the cypresses wish to dance.'

In the midst of all this traditional minstrelsy, however, one thing gleams like an iron nail among satin and silk: a fact. For what can the statement that

Hentz' gidim t'e ch'urs tari ē k'aghak'ēn k'arvan ch'ē mēti

'I know only that for four years no caravan has entered the city'

mean, in metaphorical terms, other than that the poet has been starved of love for four years? He could have said one, five, six, seven, eight, nine, or ten, the Armenian words for which in his dialect can all be monosyllabic, and thus fit his metre, though it would not be beyond his ingenuity to accommodate disyllables like *erku* 'two' or *irek'* 'three'. For most of us arithmetic is not a romantic subject. Even so, one could say that Sayat'-Nova was interested in numerical calculations, as his 1766 colophon shows. His *k'amanch'a*'s excellence is described in terms of scoring a ten, doubtless considered a perfect number by adherents of the decimal system, such as Georgians and their schoolmasters. It may be that numerologists, Islamic *hurūfī*'s for example, see something special in the figure four. I do not know, or care. For most of us, four is four, and little else. The figure is repeated in a later verse in the same poem:

Ch'urs tarekan ērekhi pēs iarēs khēratil ē uzum.

'My beloved wants to punish me like a four-year-old child.'

This would appear to have no special significance. A one-year old (*mek tarekan*) child is too young to punish, perhaps, and the two and three-year olds, though in general worse behaved than those of four, may not fit his metre. But one can never be sure with Sayat'-Nova, and there may be some now hidden reason behind the phrase. We must leave the

⁵⁰ Hasrat'yan fills Akhverdyan's lacunae, and reads *Antz' katz'av ashu[nk'va vakhtēn, sarvik'ēn?] khaghal ē uzum.* / *Hasav garunk'van husunēn, bēl[bulēn ēl gal ē uzum]* '[The time of] aut[umn] has ceased, [the cypresses] wish to dance. / The beauty of spring has come, the night[ingale too wishes to come].' To say the autumn has passed rather than the winter is odd, and *asho-* might be completed otherwise (e.g. *asho[wgh]*, *ashugh*). But these variants are of little importance.

question open. The four years during which no caravan has entered the city — by *k'aghak'ēn* 'city' Sayat'-Nova, like the Georgians and the Ossetes, will mean 'the City' par excellence, viz. Tiflis — is a different matter, however. If one takes the figure of four years seriously, then one could deduce that there had been some estrangement between the poet and his beloved that dated from the spring of 1755 at the earliest. There are no poems of Sayat'-Nova dated as of that year. There is one dated more than a year later, i.e. 3rd September 1756, *Inch' konim hek'imēn, inch' konim jarēn* 'What shall I do with a doctor, what shall I do with a surgeon', included in the *Tetrak*, but absent from Ioane's manuscript. This is described in the annotation in the *Tetrak* as a conversation between the poet and his beloved.⁵¹ The general tone and style of this poem betokens no deep seriousness, and is almost jocular, giving the impression of a run-of-the-mill exercise on a set theme. The beloved advises the love-sick poet to seek his cure elsewhere, and accompanies her advice with a threat:

*Asatz', Im dighemem k'iz ch'ē ka ch'ara.
Gēna, t'e khilk' unis, gēlkhīt char ara.
T'e ch'ē, anil ku tam k'iz p'ara p'ara.
K'u asatsēn urish tigh ē, urish tigh,
(urish tigh, aman, urish tigh).*

'She said, "There is no cup⁵² of my remedy for you.
Go, if you still have any sense, get a cure for your head.
If not, I shall have you chopped into bits."
"What you say is a different remedy, a different remedy,
(A different remedy, alas, a different remedy!)"

In what could be a revealing stanza spoken by the beloved, but which could just as well be a poetic flight of fancy, she compares herself to Queen Shirin, the Armenian wife of King Khusrau of Persia, and her would-be lover to the stone-cutter Farhād, who according to the Persian legend cut through a mountain for her. There may be a hidden

⁵¹ T p. 132, *K' ese shirvanis hangshi rom anbobs t'u uolarumzdan arut'ina da saqvareli ert'man ert' ut'k'omt' enkenist'vis G k'ks. UMD* 'By (the divinity of) Christ, this (is a song) in the Shirvan mode which (in performing according to the tune?) 'From our paths' [reading *uolarumzdan* as Azeri *yollarımızdan*] Arut'in and (his) beloved say to each other, September 3rd 444 of the chronicon' (A.D. 1756).

⁵² Hasrat'yan, *Glossary*, pp. 299, 307, interprets both *ch'ara* and *char* of the following verse as 'remedy'. This is impossible. *ch'ara* must be either Georgian *ch'ara* 'wine-cup' (Weintasse, Meckelein), 'drinking-vessel with a handle' (Trinkgefäß mit Henkel, Tsch), hardly Persian *charā* 'pasturing, grazing' (Steingass), and *char* Cl. Arm. *char* (from Iranian, cf. Persian *chârah*) 'remedy, cure'.

menace here, since Ferhâd was eventually assassinated by order of the King:

*T'agavuri t'agi layigh k'arēn im.
Shirini pēs P'ahradi dilbarēn im.
Is ên gēlkhēn Sayat'-Novu yarēn im."
K'u asatz'ēn urish tigh ê ...*

'I am the jewel worthy of a king's crown.
Like Shirin, I am the beloved of Ferhâd.
From the very first I am the beloved of Sayat'-Nova.'
'What you say is a different remedy ...'

But if something had happened in the period 1755 to 1759, one might certainly expect it to show in the poems of 1757, there being three so dated. Two are linked together in the *Tetrak* by an annotation dated 5th April 1757, both on the Mejnûn and Laila theme, both to be sung in the same tune.⁵³ Both are light pieces in a tripping metre, unsuitable for the expression of grand passion. In *Mejlumi pēs korav yarēs* 'Like Madjnun, I have lost my beloved' he wanders around, burning with love for his Laila, for whom he has become nothing better than a *yazîdî*, or infidel: *Eshkhemet daril im yizid*. Her bosom is a garden, her eyebrows are like a bow. The same idea is repeated in *Eshkhem enpes varvil im / Vuntz' Mejlum* 'I have burned with love like Majnûn': *Ghurban im tsotz'it nēranēn* 'I am a sacrifice to the pomegranates of your bosom.' Here the beloved is not described in royal terms, perhaps more, as in another poem discussed above, as a dancer:

*Mejlisneru khaghēn dun is,
Vank'erumēn taghēn dun is,
Sayat'-Novu baghēn dun is.
Karot im, bar im asum, êntighemen,
êntighemen.*

'You are the jollity of the assemblies,
You are the canticle in the monasteries,
You are the garden of Sayat'-Nova.
I am hungry. Fruit, I say, from there,
From there.'

⁵³ I pp. 118-119, the Georgian annotation reading *K' ese ori simghere im khmashi hbuln nstats e vart'in, lav [for lalov?] kanch'er na va(r)t'i hama K' arut'inas nat'k'omi aprilis E k'ks*. UME 'These two songs in that (same) voice [in Armenian] "The Nightingale sits by the Rose, he sang well (or with weeping?) for the Rose", (by the divinity of) Christ recited by Arut'in on April 5th, 445 of the chronicon' [A.D. 1757]. I fol. 70 has only four stanzas of only the first of these, *Mejlumi pes*, which he annotates *ese dubeit'is khmazed gakhilavs saiat'novis nat'k'omia* 'This is in the form [*lit.* voice] of a *dubeit* (poem in couplets [which it is not]); it is (a poem) recited by Sayat'-Nova.'

The Armenian ode dated 2nd May 1757, *K'ani vur jan im, yar, k'i ghurban im, aba inch' anim* 'As long as I draw breath, beloved, I am a sacrifice to you, but what shall I do?',⁵⁴ similarly seems to be more concerned with technique than deep passion. The fifteen syllable verse is divided into three groups of five syllables rather than the usual 7 + 8 or 8 + 7. Each of the five quatrains has the same fourth verse as a refrain:

Mut baghch'en nazov, k'iz govim sazov, il(ě)t'imazov.

'Come in the garden with grace, that I may praise you with the saz, with a request.'

The poet sheds tears, sighs sighs, praises the beloved's hair, compares her beauty with that of Laila, goes to pieces if she enters the garden, and that is it. There is no real sign of any rift, or come to that, of any true love. If there was ever a period of separation lasting four years through 1756 and 1759, there is nothing to indicate it in the poems of 1757.

In the 1759 *Ajab k'u sirtěn* ode, however, there is one verse that rings true:

Halbat' sêrěn kês ê eli, vur mizi atil ê uzum.

'Certainly his love is halved, who wishes to hate us.'

This points to an enemy, and one who formerly had love for the couple. That Sayat'-Nova had enemies in 1759 is clear. The identity of this one is obscure, but it could point to him who had become, though once his sponsor, his most powerful adversary, Irakli II himself. For he it was whose enmity was real, and had the most disastrous consequences for the poet.

The remaining 1759 Armenian poem to be discussed also raises chronological problems. For the most part *Indz u im sirekan yarin me*

⁵⁴ The poem is not in T, Hasrat'yan, pp. 44, 243 note to no. 29, quoting the five stanzas from Akhverdyan, with the annotation, in Armenian translation, 'This was recited by Arut'in in the form (*hang*) of the song (*khagh*) *T'asirn ch'ini* ("The China Cups"), May 2nd, 445 of the chronicon' [A.D. 1747]. As Hasrat'yan comments (p. 243), the reference is to Naghash Hovnat'an's song *nstemk' i mejlis, harĕk' ev eghbark' ew mets paronayk' ... T'asir(ě)n ch'ini, Kar(ě)mir gini, Dzez anush lini*, in which the fifteen-syllable verse is divided into three groups of five syllables (see Naghash Hovnat'an, *Tagher*, ed. A. Mnatz'akanyan, Erevan, 1983, p. 77). This triple arrangement is mentioned also by Ioane, fol. 61, who reproduces the poem minus Hasrat'yan's st. 4, with the following Georgian annotation: *Ese saia(t')novis gan nat'k'omia sansanisanis* [?] *khmazed segahis t'aslibia diakh kargi* 'This is (a song) recited by Sayat'-Nova in the sansanisan [?] *Az sĕn sanĭ-sĕn* 'If you be exalted', AT *sanĭ* 'high, exalted, sublime, especially said of the Ottoman court', R] mode; it is a triple [?] P **sigĕh*, cf. *sigĕna* 'triple', S] *taşlĭb*, very good.' The tune(s) referred to remain(s) unidentified.

tari berats gitenak' 'May ye know that one year bore me and my beloved'⁵⁵ is a traditional *plainte*. The blood in the lover's heart has ceased to flow, his liver is consumed, his eyes are drenched with tears, his mouth is dry, his tongue is flayed — all this was known to Sappho. The poet — he could have fooled us — is lost for words:

Lizvov ch'im kanatz'i asi, t'eguz khoskēs p'ar unenam

'I cannot speak with my tongue, though I am famous for my words.'

He is literally up to his neck in trouble:

Tsovēn ēngats ambi nēman doshs u yakhēs t'atz' ē anum

'Like a cloud that has fallen into the sea, my shirt-front and collar⁵⁶ are drenched.'

This time, no enemy is mentioned, only sympathisers:

Ov tesnum ē, ēs ē asum: Vay k'u darin, Sayat'-Nova.

Hamasha k'iz pitink' tesni ach'kēt arin, Sayat'-Nova.

Inch'ov ch'elav, ch'ē rast ēkar me lav yarin, Sayat'-Nova.

Umbreš ērazi pēs gēnatz', tsarēs ch'ēkherats gitenak'.

'Whoever sees me, says, "Woe upon thy misery, Sayat'-Nova!

We are forever compelled to see you with blood in your eye, Sayat'-Nova.

Why did there not arise, why did you not never meet a kind beloved, Sayat'-Nova?"

My life has passed like a dream, you may know that my tree is blighted.'

It is the very first verse of this regular five-stanza ode that poses the riddle:

Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak'.

'You may know that one (and the same) year brought me and my adored beloved.'

What year was it? Where did it bring them? Why might we know? Because everyone knows it, or because if we are clever, we might guess it? One thing is certain: like the ancient riddlers of Armenia or Anglo-Saxon England, he is not going to tell us. One remembers his taunt in the Georgian poem which Hasrat'yan held to celebrate Princess Ana's marriage to Prince Demetre Orbeliani in 1744:

Ar getsqinos, ch'emo kargo, sitqvashia igavi mak'vs.

'Do not be perturbed, my friend. I have (set) a riddle in (these) words.'⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See above, n. 48.

⁵⁶ *yakhē-*, Az. *yakha*, T *yâqa* 'collar of a garment', R.

⁵⁷ See above, Chapter Three, p. 81.

We have already discussed the possible significance of the cryptic reference to this 'one year' with respect to the Princess Ana,⁵⁸ the possible date of his arrival as court minstrel (? 1748),⁵⁹ the beginning of a love-affair (1751).⁶⁰ Like many riddlers the world over, Sayat'-Nova loved to play with letters of the alphabet (e.g. in 'I cry Lanalin') and numbers (e.g. the last two poems discussed). Some riddles, for example some of those in the Anglo-Saxon Exeter Book, have remained unsolved for over a thousand years. This, alas! is likely to be the case with those of Sayat'-Nova.

Such were the poems that the poet composed in the last two years of his career as court poet to Irakli II. Some others, undated, could be attributed to this period, but the problems already posed by the dated poems are of such a magnitude that inhibits further speculation. The undated Georgian poem *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head' must, however, belong to 1759 in one recension, while the other could belong to a period after the poet's exile from T'elavi and Tiflis: both were, however, composed after the blow had fallen, for which the poet takes full responsibility.

The poems of these last two years are, though not the happiest, the most impressive of the poet's œuvre. Traditional though the motifs may be, they are expressed with powerful metaphors, and one would have to be possessed of a mind particularly resistant to emotion not to credit them with a large degree of sincerity. That the poet was suffering is obvious, and we know by hindsight that there was reason for it, though we do not know the exact nature of this reason. It is perhaps natural to look outside the poet for the cause of his downfall: to an affair with a lady above his station, to too great an outspokenness with regard to the character of his superiors, to jealousies and intrigues on the part of courtiers. But perhaps the poet himself has given us a good clue in imputing the fault to his own *chkva* 'intelligence, understanding'. This could imply that he had acted unwisely. Or it could mean something more serious, in the sense of *chkva-bneli* "with darkened intelligence", i.e. 'imbecile', *chkva-dakarguli* "who has lost his reason", i.e. 'mad', *chkvidan sheshlili* 'disturbed in the mind'. One would not necessarily owe anything to Vienna to detect something approaching psychological disorder in the works of Sayat'-Nova. A high degree of hypersensitivity

⁵⁸ See above, Chapter Three, p. 115, n. 97.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114, n. 92.

informs his poems, and his protests against his enemies could denote paranoia. Perhaps, in 1758 and 1759, he was undergoing a mental breakdown. We have remarked upon the restricted nature of the modes to which he sang the songs of his last two years as minstrel, which point to a certain decline. One cannot complain of a monotony of theme in dealing with a troubadour: unrequited love is his *métier*. But it looks like monomania. On the other hand, his complaints to the King seem well-founded and rational enough. It is difficult to decide whether something outside the poet was responsible for his madness, or whether his madness was responsible for the external effects, viz. his exile.

It is safe to say that something happened in 1759 or shortly before, 'these things' (*es sak'meni*) which the poet attributes to his own 'cleverness' (*ch'emis chkvisagan*), compounded by his own obstinacy (*es ra ... akhirebuli*). This means that one cannot, for example, infer merely that the Georgian court became dissatisfied with his performance, or irritated by his style. Had he had difficulties in this domain, it would have been understandable. The 'Persian ways' he boasts of as having introduced them to the Georgian court would not have been to everyone's taste. Georgian popular music is markedly different from that of Turkey, Persia, Arabia, and Armenia in being polyphonic, vielstimmig, choral, 'vertical', counterpointed. Turkish and Armenian music is homophonic, melodic, 'horizontal', the melodic line supported only by a drone. Then there is a great difference within roughly the same system between Arabian, Persian, Turkish, and Armenian style. One has only to listen to a simple folksong sung by representatives of these nations to appreciate the difference. *Bizim müziğimiz değildir*, say the Turks: 'It's all right, but it's not *our* music.' One could, and not as superficially as it might seem, establish a misery/gaiety scale. Persian, the style apparently adopted par excellence by Sayat'-Nova, and which certainly suits the mood of his most important songs, would be the saddest. Turkish can be very sad (*ben sensiz yaşamayam* 'without you I cannot live', to quote a favourite piece of *Türk sanat müziği*), but often gay and lively. Armenian, as one can see and hear from the collections made by Komitas, is on the whole less melancholic. The gayest, according well with the general ethos of what Sir Oliver Wardrop called 'the land of wine, women, and song', is the Georgian. There would be some at the Georgian court whose ears and hearts would have suffered from the usually melancholy Persian-style strains of Sayat'-Nova. But any resulting resentment will not qualify as 'these things' responsible for the poet's downfall.

Nor can it be simply a matter of Sayat'-Nova's inspiration just drying up. This is not unknown in the history of literature. Rimbaud, abandoning poetry at the age of 21 to go for a soldier and then deal in arms, is the most obvious example. It is also known, indeed common, for poets to go mad (John Clare, Kleist, Nietzsche, Hölderlin, for example). The intensity of Sayat'-Nova's activity in 1758 and 1759 is abnormal. It looks like the sudden flaring up of a gutted candle before its final extinction.

One thing in this sad tragedy is certain. Irakli II, in 1759 at grips with many foes from inside and outside Georgia — in 1757 he and his father had come within a hair's breadth of death at the hands of Chonchol-Musa-Htarisa at Krtz'khilovani, and in 1760 his father was in St. Petersburg desperately seeking aid (a Georgian must be desperate to seek aid from Russia) against the Turks⁶¹ — would have had little time and sympathy for the tantrums of a minstrel, any more than Henry V had for jesting Falstaff.

How did it come about that the poet had to get him to a convent, after a short period as parish priest? He had no desire, as he bitterly protests in his Georgian plaintes, to exchange his silk and satins for the black robes of a priest,⁶² to retire from the world: *beroba rad mindoda* 'Why should I wish to be a monk?'.⁶³ Why, then, this being so, did he become a priest, then a monk? That he was forced into it is clear, and that by the agency of a father confessor (*modzghvari*).⁶⁴ The answer to the question lies in the realm of sociology. In feudalistic societies, such as that of England of not so very long ago, it was a practical expedient to send the youngest son (or, unkindly, the fool of the family) into the Church, mainly to maintain the patrimonial inheritance of the eldest son intact, thus transferring the responsibility of maintaining the unfortunately penniless, but genteelly bred and reasonably well-educated, member of the family to the faithful of the parish. We must resist the temptation of seeking parallels in the realm of ornithology.

Apart from this, in England and Armenia, the most obvious way for a poor but talented youth to guarantee a decent livelihood lay through the

⁶¹ See Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 199, 206.

⁶² *sheminakhe atlasit'a khasit'a / shavi kaba, shavi k'oba ar minda!* 'You kept me in satin and silk, I did not want a black soutane with a black hem!', *Damekhseni/Dameskhnebi*, B p. 21, st. 2, vv. 4-5.

⁶³ *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, long version, st. 3, v. 3, B p. 76.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, short version, st. 3, v. 5, B p. 24. One hesitates to take evidence from two different recensions, but there is not much doubt that the author of both is the same poet.

Church. But why should Sayat'-Nova be forced into such a channel? Was he, after probably at least fifteen years as a celebrated minstrel engaged by the Georgian court, still a poor man, struggling to maintain a wife and children? In an Azeri poem of as late as 1758 he complains that has not secured the minstrel's penny.⁶⁵ He whose verse contains so many references to gold, silver, rubies, and pearls, would not have possessed much of that himself. The silks and satins in which he was clad as court minstrel, and which he represents himself as having to change for a black robe on leaving the court, were unlikely to be his own: they were merely a livery, which would remain in the royal wardrobe. A monarch is not always the best paymaster. One can assume that some of the straits (*dar*) of which Sayat'-Nova complains so often were of a financial nature. It seems a farewell party to hand him a highly-praised cowl, in the presence of a khan representing the 'Sultan', was arranged for him,⁶⁶ but there is no sign that he received any sort of pension from the royal purse. He had to see to the welfare of his wife and children. A position as parish priest would enable him to do this. When his wife died and his children were older, he could, if God willed, retire to a monastery.

The fact that he was allowed this option permits us to narrow the range of his possible misdemeanour. Theft, fraud, embezzlement — though few would in any case have considered that a possibility — are definitely out: no-one would have thought of forcing Villon into holy orders. Revolutionary ideas? rather a reason for defrocking than otherwise. Unnatural vice, which his fulsome praise of the King has led some to posit, would be no recommendation — Verlaine as abbé? Adultery and fornication? There is reason to suppose, judging by the practice of Georgian celibate priests reported for that time,⁶⁷ that fairness

⁶⁵ In *Olam ayagha* 'Death's foot', st. 4, v. 3, *ierishamadum ashughlugun dangina* T p. 38. This statement would seem to indicate that he had not been able to 'graduate' (see above, p. 192 n. 150) as a professionally recognised minstrel, that he was not a member of a guild, was a free-lance, though with a degree of success that in his present mood he does not wish to dwell upon.

⁶⁶ *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, st. 5 v. 4, B p. 77; see above, Chapter Four, p. 127.

⁶⁷ In order to establish the social situation, and not for any reason of moral philosophy, one must recognise that celibacy does not necessarily predicate abstinence. Sir John Chardin, visiting Georgia in 1672, remarked, 'The churchmen get drunk as well as the laity, and keep beautiful slaves for concubines. Nobody is offended at this, because it is the authorized custom.' No doubt the Crown Prince Bagarati of Imeret'i, 'a great lover of jests and drollery', exaggerated, when Father Justin informed him of the vow prohibiting him from taking a wife, in declaring that 'our Bishops and Monks have every one nine

demanded that such sins be treated with some indulgence, though hardly counting as a qualification for holy orders. An unwanted romantic attachment for a princess on the part of a passionate minstrel, to repeat the favourite theory, would have been comparatively venal. But we are in the dark. However, whatever the fault for which Sayat'-Nova took full responsibility and confessed to his confessor, it was not such as to disqualify him from a cure of souls. It seems likely to have been more a sin of intent than of execution.

At the beginning of this chapter, we compared the fate of Sayat'-Nova with that of Ovid, who for some reason obscure to us fell foul of the Emperor Augustus and was exiled to the barren shores of the Black Sea. Relegation did not, however, entail the loss of his property, and he was able to live the life of a gentleman, though among virtual savages. He did not have to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He could moreover, continue to write his poetry, and did, giving us his fascinating *Ex Ponto* and *Tristia*. Sayat'-Nova's fate was far worse. He had no money, and had to tend to the spiritual needs, no doubt enormous, of the multifarious and changing population of the port of Anzal on the Caspian coast. It was probably of some advantage to him that he had not been a stranger to the society of merchants, having been possibly a weaver or dyer in his youth. But he had become an habitué of the court, and if he did not miss that so much, he had become, in the cities of Tiflis and T'elavi, a metropolitan, a *Grossstadtmensch*. Memories of his youth as an artisan could be painful. Could he not have expressed all that in a new style of poetry, however? One doubts that his new employers in the Armenian Church would have encouraged that. Hymns and canticles were one thing. They would certainly not have wished one of their priests to have continued to sing the love-songs with which he had entertained the lords and ladies of the Georgian court. And in this new milieu Sayat'-Nova would not have felt inspired to do so, even if he had not, as is probable, adopting a new philosophy as well as a new way of life, decided to say goodbye to all that. He had composed a few, very few, religious pieces in Armenian and Azeri (none extant in Georgian) in his heyday, but hymns were not for him. His world had changed from one

apiece, besides those of their neighbours'; but that there was something there to exaggerate is beyond doubt (Chardin, London, 1767, p. 370, Allen, p. 351). Should Armenians protest that this concerns the Georgian Church, and not their own, of which Sayat'-Nova was a member, one might recall the Armenian adage, 'The vardapet takes a wife, and Karapet gets the blame' (Ghanalanyan, *Aratsani*, p. 229).

of satins and fair ladies to one of black serge and monks. He could not, or would not, adapt his poetic talents after the manner of a Donne or Swift. In any case, the Armenian Church has ways of dealing with that sort of thing unknown to Anglicans. When in Rome ... His was something like the situation of a champion sculler exiled to the Gobi desert: there was no way in which he could practise, or demonstrate, or even in time remember, his former skill.

Sayat'-Nova as a poet, after 1759, was dead. It is just possible that there was one small flicker thereafter, which would then form another parallel with Ovid, who spent some of his time in exile on the Black Sea coast composing poetry, now lost, in the language of the Getae among whom he lived. It could be that the six Russian poems preserved by Ioane in his manuscript of 1823 were composed in Anzal on the Caspian shores whither his father was exiled and where there would have been an opportunity to meet Russian traders and sailors passing through the port. However, the poems are not dated, and they would hardly be what was expected of an Armenian priest. They were, as suggested below, Chapter Twelve, composed while he was still at the Georgian court. They are not without a certain historical and cultural interest. But whether the loss of Ovid's Getic verse is grievous or not (at least philologists must regret it), the loss of Sayat'-Nova's Russian verse would have been no tragedy from the poetic point of view.

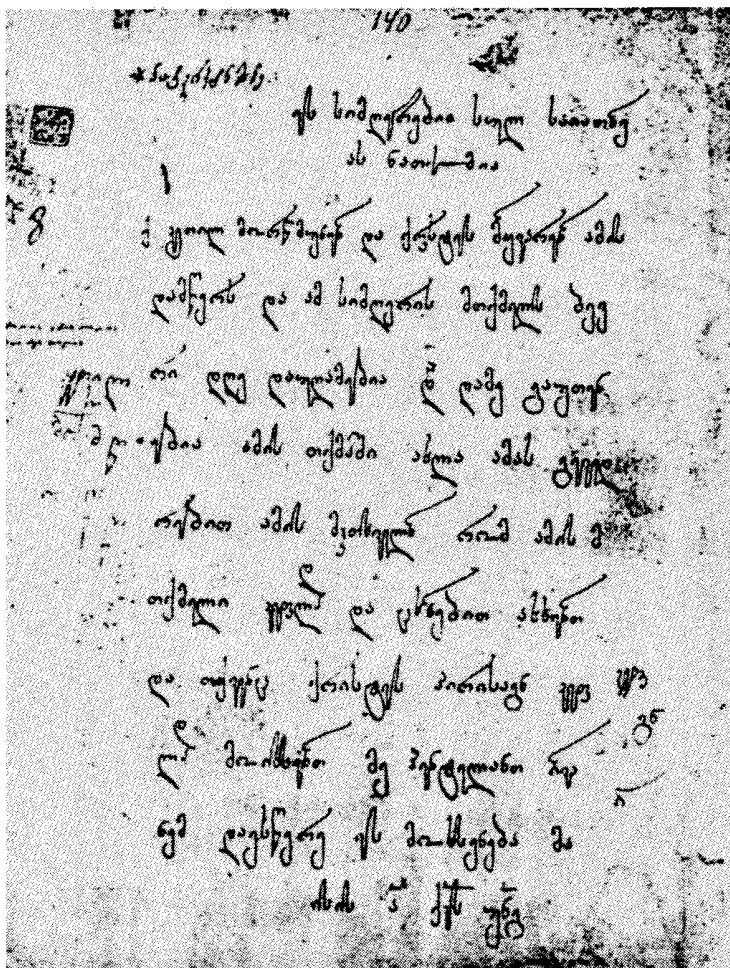
There is small reason to believe that the few snatches of verse attributed to Sayat'-Nova after he became a monk are genuine. The Azeri puns *bilmänäm*, *tanımanam*, *görmänäm* he is reputed to have perpetrated on an *ashugh* in Tiflis when he had for a time 'gone over the wall', the Azeri *chikhmanam kilisädän*, *dönmänäm Isadan* that he is supposed to have uttered at the time of his death at the hands of the Persian marauders in Tiflis, have too much of a legendary aura to be credited. The couplet that Hasrat'yan believes to have formed part of a lost poem concerning his duties as a monk at Haghpat,

Haghpati lusarar Sayat'-Noven im
*Mê kant'ighës varelu dzet' ch'unim*⁶⁸

'I am Sayat'-Nova, sacristan of Haghpat.
 I have not oil enough to light one lamp'

is almost certainly bogus. It would have stood a better chance of being believed if it were metrically regular, instead of being composed of

⁶⁸ For these fragments, see H pp. xxxiv-xxxv; cf. above, pp. 30, 37, 47-8.



The Colophon of the *Tetrak*, p. 140, in Georgian: *es simgherebi sul saiat'novas nat'k'omia. K' ket'il mortsmunebo da K'ristes mqvarebo amis damtser[i]s da am simgheris mt'k'mels bevri dghe daughamebia da ghame gaut'enebia amis t'k'mashi amas gevedrebit' amis mkit'khelno rom amis mt'k'meli ket'ilad da tz'khonebit' akhsenit' da t'k'ventz' K'ristes pirisag[a]n ket'ilad moikhsenebt' me pentelant' ivanem davtsere es mokhseneba maisis A k'(roni)k(on)s UNG* 'These songs are all recited by Sayat'-Nova. (In the name of) Ch(rist). Good believers and lovers of Christ, (the writer) of this script and the reciter of this song(book) [SN himself] has turned many days into night and spent many nights on this text. Now I request of your readers of it that you remember its reciter kindly and with a blessing, and you also will be well remembered by Christ. I, Pentelant', Ivane, wrote this memorial on May 1st, 453 of the chronicon [A.D. 1765]'. The Georgian cursive in the top left corner appears to read *patkir k'[i?]z nmane* (Arm. '(the) picture is like you?'). The Georgian seal bears the name *Ramin*. The numerous scribbles round the colophon show that it has been used as a model of calligraphy, deservedly.

11 and 10 syllables, but not much better. On the other hand, Sayat'-Nova did not lose all interest in his earlier activity. Concern that his work should not be lost to posterity led by May 1765 to the compilation of the *Tetrak*, the main text of which is probably mostly — and perhaps even entirely, the variations in the scripts being possibly due to varying moods — in his own Armenian and Georgian hands. Certain is that the notice in Georgian script on p. 102 (see above, p. 12) and the macaronic mixture of Armenian and Georgian script on p. 103 (Plate C) with verbs in the first person singular, are in the poet's own hand, as must be the many personal annotations in Georgian. He must be the writer and reciter referred to in the calligraphic Georgian colophon by Ivane Pentelant' (Plate E), doubtlessly only commissioned to affix an elegant finale to the poet's own on the whole untidy texts, which bears witness to Sayat'-Nova's interest in fine writing. That was by this time capable of a regular Armenian *bolorgir* style is shown by the biblical manuscript which he as a priest completed at Kakhi in 1766 (Plate D). That he included no Georgian poems in the *Tetrak* apart from the few verses in the *Poem in Four Languages* might be indicative of a certain pique at his treatment at the Georgian court. His preoccupation with the past is revealing: he had no new songs to sing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TECHNIQUES: RHYME, METRE, VERSIFICATION

We have seen that Sayat'-Nova was not unaware of his worth. Was he a great poet? Value judgments are dangerous, and comparisons between representatives of different literatures invidious. To compare Sayat'-Nova's poetic achievement with that of Shakespeare or Goethe will do him no service; it may be with Literature as with History: the greater the society, the more significant its actions and its ideas, and the Caucasus is a small world. But within Armenian literature, beside Gregory of Narek and K'uch'ak Nahapet, Sayat'-Nova ranks high. Indeed, through his songs, frequently performed, in the life of the Armenian people, like Burns among the Scots, he can be said to rank highest of all.

For the songs of Sayat'-Nova remain popular throughout all the Armenian communities in the world, be it that of Erevan in the Armenian Republic, or that of Chicago in the Diaspora where, as in many other places, as with Omar Khayyâm among the Persians, there is a restaurant named after him. He is recited and sung everywhere. That equal weight is placed upon both forms of performance, that is, as poems and as songs, is clear from the programme of the soirée arranged by the Caucasian Society of Armenian Writers at Tiflis on 25th May 1913 on the occasion of the consecration of his memorial in the Church of St. George, at which his great admirer Hovhannes T'umanyan recited, and the musician Abgar and his group sang and played, the same ode, *Me khosk unim* 'I have a word to say' as separate items on the agenda.¹ The text of this particular ode is fairly straightforward, apart from the Tiflis Armenian dialect which could present no difficulty for its listeners in the Georgian capital itself. It is, however, a fact that most Armenians nowadays do not fully understand the words of Sayat'-Nova's verse. The loanwords *ilt'imaz* 'request' and *int'izar* 'expectation' might still be understood by those for historical reasons, in Eastern and Western communities, still conversant with Persian or Turkish. One can be sure, however, that nowadays most Armenians, hearing *Ashkharës me p'anjara ê*,

¹ Hovhannes T'umanyan, *Sayat'-Nova*, ed. Zaryan, Erevan, 1945, p. 80.

t'agherumen bezaril im 'This world is a cage, I am sick of the *tagh*'s' would, apart from interpreting *p'anjara* as Turkish *pencere* 'window', which is a possibility, think of *t'agh* only in the sense of 'town quarter', and not as Arabic/Persian/Turkish/Azeri *tâq/tak/tagh* 'vault, arch, niche'; while, apart from Tiflis Armenians, most would be perplexed by the dialectal ablative suffix *-umen*. And yet, for all its difficulty and obscurity, Sayat'-Nova's verse still holds a spell over the minds of his compatriots two centuries after his death.

Here one may be permitted to ask oneself if it matters whether the words of a poem are fully understood. Or understood with the intellect at all. There used to be scholars convinced that Homer's meaning would strike through if his verse were properly read (something in fact now impossible, for no-one can now appreciate the relationship between the long and short syllables of the quantitative metre and the often metrically insignificant pitch accent of the words), sufficiently to be comprehended by infants. Who, they might ask, upon hearing Ἡὼς δὲ κροκόπεπλος ἐκίδνατο πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἶαν (*Iliad*, xxiv. 695), could fail to see a vision of golden sunrise conjured up in his mind's eye? The answer is, of course, anyone who does not know Greek. Nevertheless, something approaching meaning may be conveyed by the music of verse, be it melodious (e.g. Tennyson's *murmuring of innumerable bees*), or cacophonous (Masefields's *Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack*), both harmonious in the strict sense of the word, i.e. musically consonant with their context. The vital importance of music was stressed by Walter Pater, who, in his article on the painter Giorgione, held that it is the yardstick by which all art is measured, the task of aesthetic criticism consisting in determining to what extent a work of art in any field approached the most sublime musical law. Virgil is known to have been so enamoured of the sound of his verse that he fell into a melancholy mood when the sore throat from which he chronically suffered prevented him from declaiming them, which he did so melodiously that one of his rivals openly expressed his envy of his enchanting skill, with the remark, however, that were it not for that, his verses were void of content. This early critic was unfair, but he was clearly one for whom the music of poetry counted for nearly everything. The sound of verse is often such that its meaning is submerged, even irrelevant. Every reader of poetry, and that in his own language, has found himself so carried away by the musicality of the verse that he becomes completely unaware of what it is saying. Does everyone who hears or reads Yeats's

Down in the sally gardens know what a *sally* is? And in that most musical of modern poets, Dylan Thomas, the inspired music presents itself immediately to the senses, while the thought, undoubtedly there and married to the music, calls for something like excavation to be intelligible to the conscious mind:

*Shut, too, in a tower of woods, I mark
On the horizon walking like the trees
The wordy shapes of women, and the rows
Of star-gestured children in the park.
Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,
Some of the oaken voices, from the roots
Of many a thorny shire tell you notes,
Some let me make you of the water's speeches.²*

Good poets have meanings they wish to impart, and Sayat'-Nova is one of them. It is not his fault, and not his intention, if his audience should find his verse obscure — except in the case of his deliberately cryptic statements: he can be very clear, even blunt, when he feels it necessary. But he was not only a poet with an ear for melodious verse: he was a practising musician and singer also. In this he reminds one of the 16th-17th century English lutenist John Dowland, in whose songs, a critic has said, 'music and words are fused in a singleness of conception that is hard to parallel'.³ Parallels there are, however, between Dowland and Sayat'-Nova. Both were singers and musicians who experienced difficulties from the court. The different nature of these difficulties may throw light upon their respective characters. Dowland was unsuccessful in two bids to become one of Elisabeth I's lutenists, and it was not until his creativity was virtually at an end that he became lutenist to James I after a reluctant career in Europe. Why? The only satisfactory explanation must be that he was not, as a practical musician, technically superior to other candidates. Then, though a brilliant composer, he did not himself write the texts of his songs. Sayat'-Nova wrote his own songs, and in claiming skill on three instruments was most probably not exaggerating his excellence as a practising musician: but from his own annotations one sees that he often fitted his songs to known melodies. No-one is perfect: everyone has an Achilles heel by which, when things go wrong, he may be taken. Both, however — and it is upon that that their

² Especially when the October wind, st. 2.

³ See *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. M. Drabble, Oxford U.P., (1985) 1990, p. 288.

fame rests — had a feeling for what Richard Paget called ‘pure sound’, that is, sound fully expressive of sense, which Karl Kerényi found so characteristic of Virgil that he describes his language as ‘a representation of the world through sound and nothing other than sound’,⁴ with admittedly some exaggeration, since that is a claim that only a musician can make. In this aesthetic context, however, Sayat’-Nova’s odes can count as well as those of any other as ‘sheer song’, carrying away the mind and emotions of his listeners as by a spell. He, too, is a *poète mage*. His enchantment has nothing to do with abracadabras that defy analysis because they are bogus, insubstantial, and ineffectual. There will always be in poetry an intractable element of mystery that transcends, exceeds, floats above and weaves between the words, so basically inadequate to grasp reality that Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, conceived speech to be one of the main obstacles to reason, his *Idola fori*. It is a difficult task for the mere student of language to seek to uncover the reasons for a poet’s fame. Indeed, the Abbé Dubos, whose *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* of 1719, near the date of Sayat’-Nova’s birth, are still relevant, held that it is not the task of critics, scholars, or even fellow artists to determine the effectiveness of a poet or artist: a critic can only seek to justify the verdict of the public, who rely upon their inner conviction, or a sixth sense. Some critics, especially in this century, mainly at Cambridge (otherwise a fount of wisdom), imagine that they can pick and choose, ignoring Pope’s warning in his *Essay on Criticism*:

*Most critics, fond of some subservient art,
Still make the whole dependent on a part:
They talk of principles, but notions prize,
And all to one loved folly sacrifice.*

Sayat’-Nova is a poet much prized by his people. In accord with the Abbé Dubos’ sound principle, it is our duty to try to determine the reason.

To what extent is a poet dependent on the sounds of his native language? Perhaps only a non-human visitor from Outer Space could determine with the required scientific objectivity which human languages count as beautiful and which as ugly, since all human beings have a language of their own by which they are bound to a large extent to judge of

⁴ “Die Sprache als Raum einer Welt Darstellung durch Ton und nichts anderes”, ‘Virgilius’, *Die Grossen*, Kindler: Zürich, 1977, II/1, p. 121.

the languages of others. But as with every *art du possible*, something can be said. An Englishman speaks a language in which every single sound, apart possibly for *s*, differs from its near equivalent in French, which is, moreover, possessed of nasal vowels and a guttural *r* foreign to English. Nevertheless, most Englishmen with any experience of French will consider it a euphonious form of speech in which captivating poetry of great harmony and strength is heard. Most human beings would consider Turkish, in which morphology is predicated upon vocalic harmony, an harmonious form of speech. The Turk might find Arabic, with its gutturals, laryngals and emphatics barely human, the Arab Turkish too smooth, unmanly. One could go on: Italian and Persian are beautiful, Portuguese and Dutch ugly. Yet all languages have poetry written in them which their speakers find beautiful. The poet plays upon his language as a musician upon his instrument: he exploits to their best effect what others might consider its strength and weaknesses: for if need be, the Arab poet can choose words as smooth as Turkish, and the Turk can select consonants as vigorous as Arabic.

Where, in this notional scale of harmony, does Armenian stand? A colleague, a Turkish scholar,⁵ tells me that the Turks think that Armenian sounds like the twittering of frightened birds, the element of fear being no doubt due to historical circumstances rather than linguistic, which latter may be explained by the profusion of affricate consonants in Armenian, though these seem no more obtrusive to an Englishman than those of his own language, which can justifiably claim some memorable lines. As with English, which accommodates Burns and Clare, in Armenian dialects differ. That of Sayat'-Nova, Tiflis Armenian, is rich in Georgian ejective consonants represented in Western Armenian by smoother voiced plosives and affricates. But all varieties of Armenian are rich in vowels. And these have a music of their own.

That every vowel has a character of its own is a matter of scientific fact, not measurable perhaps in terms of different frequencies, since all may be produced at the same musical pitch, but nevertheless with a distinctive sonority. Arthur Rimbaud was sensitively aware of this in relating the quality of each vowel to a corresponding colour — *A noir, E blanc, I rouge, O bleu, U vert* — as well as, in searching to create 'un verbe poétique accessible ... à tous les sens', visualising the possibility

⁵ Ave, Cyril Mundy, Esq.

of establishing the effect and rôle of every consonant.⁶ Rimbaud's vowel/colour correspondences seem arbitrary. A more phonological schema based on the relative darkness and brightness of the bands of the spectrum might be *U* (not Rimbaud's French *Ū*), *O*, *A* (long, broad, as in Persian and Sayat'-Nova's Eastern Armenian), *O* as violet, indigo, dark red (representing as velars the dark colours of the spectrum), black; *I*, *E* yellow, orange (as palatals representing the light, bright colours); and short *A* green (as a soft palate, cacuminal, middle, neutral vowel). It is, however, a strange coincidence, though Rimbaud would not have thought it so, that his system accords very accurately with the Armenian names for the various colours: Classical *seaw* 'black' (*A* noir; but Modern *sev* with *E*); *chermak* 'white' (*E* blanc); *karmir* 'red' (*I* rouge); Classical *kapoyt* 'blue' (*O* bleu; but pronounced in Modern Armenian *kapuyt*, cf. Persian *kabûdî*, thus with *U*). But *U vert* is badly let down by Arm. *kanach* 'green', which supports my *A green*. That all of the above Armenian names of colours except the last are loans from Iranian must be irrelevant: they are the terms they use. There is probably something in this sound/meaning correspondence theory⁷, which might be decently obscured by such a term as phonosemantics or phonaesthesia. Reference to the *colour* of a vowel is common. A pure mathematician will not be convinced; a probability specialist, or statistician, might, however, see a glimmer of sense in it. And in his synaesthesia theory, Rimbaud has in some way a predecessor in Shakespeare, who already linked sound with scent:

⁶ 'Une saison en enfer', *Délires II: Alchimie du verbe*: 'J'inventai la couleur des voyelles! — *A* noir, *E* blanc, *I* rouge, *O* bleu, *U* vert. Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne, et, avec des rythmes instinctifs, je me flattai d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens. Je réservais la traduction.' Rimbaud is known to have been a good Latinist, and he is careful enough to put forward his theory as a dream or vision, with a touch of humour in reserving the copyright. It is not fair, therefore, to hold him *au pied de la lettre*. But if we did not take the dreams and visions of poets seriously, we should dispense with the Hebrew prophets, most of Dante, much of Walter von der Vogelweide, and Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, to name a few.

⁷ In 1970 I conducted an experiment with members of my Oxford classes in which eight pairs of opposite concepts (hot/cold, fat/thin, sweet/sour, red/green, quick/slow, beautiful/ugly, war/peace, me/you) were translated into six languages (Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Lithuanian, Japanese, Turkish), participants, asked to ignore the languages they knew, being required to try to determine what meant what by the sound of the words. Everyone scored above 50%, and one, an Armenian, scored 75%.

The number of participants, a dozen, was too small for a satisfactory linguistic experiment. But we were satisfied that there is some correspondence between sound and meaning, and that it would be worth while to repeat the experiment on a larger scale.

*That strain came upon my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets
Stealing and giving odour*

(*Twelfth Night*, I.1.4-6)

A poet is always concerned with the music of the verse. Pope, again:

*True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness give offence:
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.*

At the very dawn of European poetry, Homer has Hector's mother address her slain son's body thus:

Ἕκτορ, ἐμῷ θυμῷ πάντων πολὺ φίλτατε παίδων,
ἧ μὲν μοι ζωὸς περ ἐὼν, φίλος ἦσθα θεοῖσιν ...

(*Iliad*, xxiv.748-9)

'Hector most dear to my heart of all my sons,
Who, when you still lived for me, were dear to the gods, too...'

— verses in which, in addition to the many solemn spondees (four of the six feet of the first hexameter), the long *o*'s of *emô*, *thymô*, *pantôn*, *paidôn*, *zôos*, *eôn*, echo the moans of the afflicted Hecabe. Virgil achieves a like effect in describing the groans of Laocoon in the coils of the serpents as like those of the wounded bull in the sacrificing of which he has been interrupted:

*quālīs / mūgī/tūs fū/gīt cūm / sāūcius / āram
tāūrus ...*

'Like the bellowing of the wounded bull as it fled the altar ...'

(*Aeneid*, v. 223-4)

I have marked the syllables that are long both by nature and position to show the drawn-out effect of the spondees (which could not be more without making the hexameter unsatisfactorily spondaic), which enhance the effect of the 'dark' *u*'s. Verlaine, the most musical of modern French poets, conjures up the sonority of the G string of the violin with the *o*'s and *a*'s ('O bleu, A noir'), the nasality of some being particularly apt for the instrument, in his tone-poem in evocation of the languorously dying year:

*Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur*

*D'une langueur
Monotone.*

And a subsequent stanza lifts one with its sharper vowels ('E blanc') first in a fitful flight aloft, before coming down to earth (*a - ö - o*):

*Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deçà, delà,
Pareil à la
Feuille morte.⁸*

In this sound/meaning context, it is no coincidence that England's most musical poet, John Keats, employs a similar preponderance of *u*'s and *a*'s in his own poem *To Autumn* (a name the phonetics of which are in perfect accord with its nature). Apart from the heavy, long vowels, the poet exploits the 'clammy' bilabial nasal *m*, and the glutinous lateral *l*, thus instinctively aware of Rimbaud's concept of the *mouvement de chaque consonne*, as well as his *rythmes instinctifs*:

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells ...*

One cannot ignore the slow effect of the long palatal vowels in conjunction with the sibilants (two voiced) in the rhymes and near-rhymes *trees/bees/cease*. There is a magic in this, for it is certain that Keats did not consciously sit at his desk to sift out suitable and unsuitable vowels and consonants. As with the music of Mozart, one can, after long analysis, see what has been done. The question remains, what sort of human brain can instinctively produce it. For instinctive it must largely be, a product of that stage of mental activity that lies between the conscious and the unconscious, that semi- or sub-conscious region in which the senses have free play, and whisper to Coleridge in a dream his tale of

⁸ 'Chanson d'Automne', *Poèmes saturniens*, *Paysages tristes* V.

Kubla Khan. In appealing to the concept of instinct, one is aware that music is not a purely anthropological matter. Ornithologists who have analysed the song of the lark by slowing it down on their recording instruments by a factor of ten have established that the musical themes are not only more numerous and various than those of the nightingale, but of most human composers also. One can see why some have posited outside agencies such as gods or muses, but Ockham has taught us not to make matters more complicated by unnecessary hypotheses: the problem comes from within the organism, not from outside.

With the above poems on Autumn, one may contrast another treating of a different season, Spring: namely, Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. In this the stirring action of the wind is, as by Verlaine's *Et je m'en vais / Au vent mauvais*, represented by sharp, closed vowels, *e* and *i*, sounds which peck and probe, while, with respect to the *mouvement de chaque consonne*, the force of the wind is evoked also by windy bilabials (*Wild West Wind*), aspirate plosives (*breath, being, black, presence, pale, pestilence*), and numerous sibilants (*West, breath, unseen, presence, leaves, pestilence-stricken, multitudes*):

O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autum's being,
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes ...

And how does this same poet conjure up the inert earth in the grip of Autumn? Like Keats, with heavy, sonorous *u*'s and *o*'s and *ö*'s, and long drawn-out diphthongs:

Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O hear ...

One will remark how in the last line the poet adjusts his phonetics to move, at first lumberingly, from the static *solid atmosphere* to the fierce movement of *fire*, and to the explosive *burst* of the hail. Then, as though vying with Keats, the langorous autumnal nasals and laterals:

... the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The seablooms and the oozy woods which wear

The sapless foliage of the **ocean, know**
 Thy voice ...
 The **tumult** of thy mighty harmonies
 Will take from both a deep **autumnal** tone ...

The above examples will suffice to show what can be done, largely instinctively but partly by conscious choice, to convey meaning by sound. To what extent is this technique applied in Oriental poetry? Among the twenty-one poetic devices listed by Mirza Muhammad Qazvîni as those to which the Persian poet may resort,⁹ the onomatopoeic conveyance of meaning finds no place, although, as we shall see, it is practised by the poet who is the subject of his investigation, Hâfiz. This, Persia's justifiably most celebrated poet, is particularly appreciated for the 'sweetness of his melody and the fluency and firmness of his verse'.¹⁰ Of what do these qualities consist? Much of the answer lies in the phonetic structure of Persian in its normal state. English is not, as spoken for everyday purposes and not adapted by Keats and Shelley, a particularly euphonious tongue. Turkish, with its essential vocalic harmonies, and Persian, with its broad vowels and even rhythms, are. Persian, however, does not possess an exploitable variety of vowel sounds to the same extent as English, a circumstance deriving from the history of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages in which original *e/ê* and *o/ô*, used as we have seen to great effect by Greek, Latin, French, English poets, came to be assimilated to *a/â* (thus *dah* < **dek¹m* Gk. *deka*, Lat. *decem*, Eng. *ten*). This process resulted in a great profusion of *a*'s and *â*'s, with the palatal vowels, of different origin, in a comparatively small minority. We are able to compare fairly closely the technique of the Persian and English poets, since Hâfiz devoted some verses to the same natural phenomenon as Shelley, the wind. The Persian poet addresses the morning breeze thus:

Nâsîm-i şubḥ-i sa'âdat, bidân nishân ki tu dâni.
guzar ba-kûy-i fulân kinn, dar ân zamân ki tu dâni.

'Breeze of the morning of happiness, give the signal that you know.
 Pass down the street of such-and-such place of refuge at the time that you know.'

⁹ Preface to Qâsim Ghanî, *Baḥṭh dar âthâr u afkâr u aḥvâl-i Hâfiz* [Investigation of the impressions, thoughts, and states of Hâfiz], t. 1, Tehran, 1321/1942, pp. iv-ix, cit. and tr. A.J. Arberry, *Hâfiz — fifty poems*, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 18-19.

¹⁰ *Târikh-i adabîyât-i îrân* [History of Persian literature], cit. and tr. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Le Gallienne's version does the poem more poetic justice:

'Breeze of the morning, at the hour thou knowest,
The way thou knowest, and to her thou knowest,
Of lovely secrets messenger,
I beg thee carry this despatch for me.'¹¹

The Persian sibilants *s*, *s*, *sh*, and the long and short *i/î*'s of the first verse are almost surely chosen to imitate the sound and the smooth but probing action of the wind. That Ḥâfîz was skilled in alliteration is seen e.g. in his hemistich

*shâh shimshâd-i qad ân Khusrav-i shîrîn dahanân*¹²
'Royal box-tree, lofty as that Emperor of the sweet lips'

in which the three sibilant *sh*'s, forming an alliteration that would satisfy the canons of Anglo-Saxon verse, imitates the rustling of the tree and the silk-clad beauty of which it is a favoured image. But overall the euphony of Persian verse rests on the many rich *â*'s, which provide the Persian poet with a ready-made musicality, as of a slow and graceful pavane.

What of Sayat'-Nova? Armenian, although it is not a language that assimilated Indo-European *e/ê* and *o/ô* to *a/â*, is also rich in *a*'s, which albeit of 'middle' quantity in Western dialects, is broad and long in the Eastern dialects of Tiflis and New Julfa, so much so that those letter-writers who spell as they speak often write it as *o*. *a* is the most common vowel in Armenian, occurring in roughly a third of Armenian syllables, leaving the other two-thirds to be shared by *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and *ë*. It derives not only from Indo-European **a/â*, **a*, and sometimes **o*: its frequency is increased by the many loans from Iranian. To this natural feature is due a large part of the sonority of Sayat'-Nova's verse, although its overall occurrence is not in excess of the average. Of the 300 syllables of *Ashkharës me panjara ê* 'This world is a cage', 107 comprise *a*, i.e. 35.66%; of the 300 syllables of *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats* 'Your form drawn by a pen', 100 are in *a*, i.e. 33%. A formally similar poem by his predecessor Naghash Hovnat'an (1661-1722), a love song comprising five quatrains of verses of sixteen syllables, in all 320, has 118 in *a*, i.e. 36.6%.¹⁴ Sayat'-Nova skilfully exploits this natural assonance

¹¹ *Cit. Arberry. op. cit.*, p. 128.

¹² *Ibid.* i, p. 69.

¹³ H pp. 70, 107 respectively.

¹⁴ *Tagh Siroy*, Naghash Hovnat'an, *Tagher*, ed. A. Mnatz'akanyan, Erevan, 1983, no. 12, pp. 35-36. As a further control, one may perhaps quote a Classical Armenian poem of 22 verses with no Modern Persian loans by a non-Armenian in whom no partic-

to achieve a slow, measured effect. The first verse of the visually-imaged *Patkirk'ët* comprises nine *a*'s out of fifteen:

*Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats, tahrët rangë rang is anum*¹⁵

'Your form drawn as by a pen, your purity you adorn with many colours'

So also the equally resonant first verse of *Dastmazët* 'Your coiffure':

*Dastamazët sim u sharbab, nam sagh ekats rehan ê*¹⁶

'Your coiffure is silver and silk, the moist dew upon it (smells like sweet basil'

It is possible to find a verse comprising ten *a*'s, i.e. 66% of the syllables:

*Pak' ch'unis p'ach'ahzadimen, angham, arantz' sakhtis, gozal*¹⁷

'You have no trouble from princes, carefree, without the hardship (I suffer), beautiful one'

Since this occurs in a poem, *Angin akën vëret sharats* 'Priceless pearls are strung about you',¹⁸ full of, apart from the many Persian loanwords, allusion to Iranian themes (*T'avuzi takht* 'Peacock Throne', *Skandar-i Zulqari* 'Horned Alexander', *hurizada* 'houri's child'), it is possible that Sayat'-Nova was deliberately striving for a Persian effect. In any case, that is what he achieves, for hemistichs with ten *a*'s are easily found in Persian verse, which, however, unlike Armenian, distinguishes between short and long *a/â*. For example, in the first hemistich of Ḥâfiẓ's *Badeh sâqî may* 'Cup-bearer, pour me wine':

*Agar ân turk-i Shîrâzi ba-dast ârad dil-i marâ*¹⁹

'If that Turk(ish youth) of Shiraz grasp our heart in his hand ...'

ular susceptibility to any special colouring of the vowel *a* may be supposed, and who was aiming at no onomatopoeic or alliterative effects, namely the present writer's own *Odisews hrazhari* 'Ulysses bids farewell', in which of 330 syllables 118 comprise *a*, i.e. 32.7% (Raft, San Francisco, vol. 3, 1989, p. 57).

¹⁵ T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7.

¹⁶ T p. 117, H p. 34.

¹⁷ *Angin akën vëret sharats*, st. 3, v. 4, T p. 123, I fol. 65A, H p. 50. *p'ak'* for APT *fakr* 'thought, care, anxiety' (*P fakr dâshtan* 'have a care for'), possibly also 'need' (S); *sakht-is* / *saght-is* comprises P *sakhtî* 'hardness, harshness, severity' (S), and shows that the phrase must be read as *arantz' sakht-i-s* 'without my harshness, i.e. without the harshness that I suffer', cf. the rhyme in st. 4 v. 4, *ku akhtis*), and not, as Hasrat'yan, *arantz' sakht is* 'you are without harshness', since the preposition *arantz'* properly governs the genitive (though in modern poetry, e.g. that of Ch'arentz', it may govern the accusative).

¹⁸ This phrase may remind readers of 'Orient pearls at random strung' in Sir William Jones's rendering of Ḥâfiẓ's poem beginning *Agar ân turk Shîrâzî*, v. 9, Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 3, pp. 39, 86; there is no such phrase in the original.

¹⁹ Arberry, *ibid.*

(in which, moreover, the second *-a-*'s of *agar*, *ârad*, and *ba-dast* are metrically long by position).

On the other hand, a verse with ten *a*'s may occur quite unintentionally, as in my philosophical poem quoted above: *Mi hawatak' yastuatsës, ya'aspelës apawineal* 'Do not believe in gods, taking refuge in legends'.²⁰ And nothing is easier than to compose an Armenian verse comprising words with only *a* as vowel: for example, using only words found in Sayat'-Nova's own poems:

**Zar-zarbab hak'ats, yars angham hazar babat' ban asaw*²¹

'Dressed in silk and gold, my beloved, free from care, spoke a thousand varied words'

The poet's very occasional readiness to rhyme *a* with *o* and *u* (*dost*, *ghast*, *dus* in *Me khosk unim*, st. 3, H p. 46) is an indication of its broad quality.

One must note that the poet's choice of a pen-name shows a strong awareness of the sonority of what is tempted to call his favourite vowel, one in perfect accord (*A noir*) with his and the traditional *ashugh*'s pre-eminent mood, melancholy. But even in this name, which comprises three *a*'s, some restraint on his part may be conjectured: for if the second element is straightforwardly Iranian (though the use of *straightforwardly* immediately signals caution, and recalls the possibility of a typical Sayat'-Novian pun on European and Russian words for 'new', already mooted above), then **Nava* would have been more usual for Persian *nawâ* 'song, melody', which would have produced a pen-name with four *a*'s, as, in fact, in its Georgian form *Saiat'nama*. *a* being a vowel upon which a singer may expressively dwell, such a sonorous pen-name could be used with great effect in the fifth, signing-off, stanza, and thus does Sayat'-Nova often exploit it. It occurs ten times in

*Sayat'-Nova, khoskët asa, bellu k'aman dari babat'*²²

'Sayat'-Nova, speak your word, in the open like a bowman'

Nine times in

*Makam miraw Sayat'-Noven, angachët khaghin karot ê*²³

'If Sayat'-Nova should die, will your ear lack music?'

²⁰ P. 244 n. 14.

²¹ *zar-zabad*, *hak'ats*, H p. 12; *yars*, p. 41; *angham*, p. 50; *hazar babat' ban*, p. 11; *asaw*, p. 76.

²² In *Ach'k u unk'ët*, st. 5, v. 4, I fol. 68A, H p. 64.

²³ In *Vuntz'or vur gharib bëlbul*, st. 5, v. 4, T p. 120, H p. 45.

and

Sayat-Noven asatz^c, dardēs kantz^c mecharēn shatatzil ê²⁴

‘Sayat^c-Nova has said, My suffering has increased to more than a torrent.’

Eight times in

Sayat^c-Noven asatz^c, gu lam, ch^cim latz^c li t^ce char unenam²⁵

‘Sayat^c-Nova has said, I weep, (but) shall not weep if I find a remedy’

One may note, however, that though the vowel is broad and positive enough to steal practically all the accentuation of a verse, its judicious placement ensures a fitting metrical and cantabile rhythm.

Verses in Sayat^c-Nova’s Armenian poems that do not contain the vowel *a*, not one in fifteen syllables, are rare. One can find five short verses of four syllables, one of seven, one of eight,²⁶ and two verses of eleven syllables. The short verses, part of unusual metrical schemes, are not of statistical importance. In the case of the two verses of eleven syllables, one could conceive of reasons for the absence of the sonorous *a*. *Amen ghochⁱ gēlkhin memek shun unim* ‘At the head of every ram (bell-wether) I have a dog’²⁷ is the prosaic, matter-of-fact statement of a goatherd; and in *Ovor indz chⁱ siri, is êl ch^cim siri* ‘Whomsoever does not love me, I shall not love him’,²⁸ the defiance is given perhaps extra point by the eightfold use of sharp, closed *i*. Irakli’s grandson, T^ceimurazi Batonishvili, with particular reference to his Georgian poems, characterises Sayat^c-Nova as composing ‘fitting verses, melodiously and wonderfully (constructed), meaningful and to the point’, ‘exceptionally pleasing’.²⁹ Can it be claimed, however, that the poet showed the skill we have demonstrated in English and French poets in exploiting the various colours of the vowels at his disposal? Certainly he possessed the aptitude for phonetic manipulation expected of an Azeri poet. His work in this

²⁴ In *Ashkharēs me p’anjara ê*, st. 5, v. 1, T p. 133, I fol. 63A, H p. 70.

²⁵ In *Is me gharib bēbuli pes*, st. 5, v. 1, T p. 107, H p. 18.

²⁶ *nērid oskov, dosht ê shini, nur govēli, mētik tu miz, khist tēkhur is*, all in *Angach ara barit’avur*, H pp. 12, 13, 14, 16; *tesnoghin Mejlum ku shinis* ‘You will make everyone who sees you a Majnūn’, H p. 23; *is me êshkhi junun im* ‘I am driven mad by one love’, H p. 30.

²⁷ *Geln u ch’obanē* ‘The Wolf and the Shepherd’, st. 3, v. 3, H p. 76.

²⁸ *Ēshkhēn vaṛ kērak ê* ‘Love is a burning fire’, st. 5, v. 3, H p. 30.

²⁹ *Katalogi*, p. 40, *cit. supra*, Chapter One, pp. 15-16, n. 52.

Turkish language comprises poems in which the first and last letter of each verse is the same throughout, the so-called *avali-akhër* (*ävväl-äkhër*) ‘first-last’, a genre unknown in Western literature. Sayat^c-Nova himself indulges in this form only in Azeri, a language, like Persian, the many monosyllables of which facilitate the poet’s task; the inflected forms of Armenian and Georgian make these languages less amenable. The form is principally an opportunity for the poet to display his virtuosity, which his Azeri audience (or probably the less aesthetically endowed sections of it) must have admired. A good example is Sayat^c-Nova’s *ävväl-akhër* on the sound *J*.³⁰ To create this poem of five quatrains, the poet had to find twenty words beginning with this sound, and twenty ending in it of which six are monorhymed. This would be an impossible task for a French, German, or Russian poet, since the sound occurs in their languages only in a few loanwords. What Armenian and English can do, we shall see. The poem reads

*Ju k’amsëz ghuluay^a yar êilama guj.^b
 jamalo(w)n ayinadur jan^c êdar zarinj.
 javahir eshkhunda^d man ôlmisham t’uj.
 jami ghëzël^e idum dard^f êt’ti fërinj.
 Jôvz hëndëstani^g isan t’avrizi t’imaj.^h
 juharunⁱ gôranda ôldum nailaj.
 junai istanbo^j san êit’anur alaj.^k
 jayi ayinaband^l san varaghun narinj.^m
 Jan t’akⁿ mnum ôlsan min t’umanda bôtj.ⁿ
 jiz ch’ak’ub êilaram min t’umanda kharj.
 jublê^o alam sandan ôt’ur tit’ar^p marj.
 jêhan diar mamalari var t’urinj.
 Jêiran ghadun^q gôrdum aghlum^r ôldi vëj.
 jughab êilay gôzal ishumi êdim nêj.
 jununam ashkhundan^s sôilêiram t’êj.
 jadubaz alarun ôlmish ghëzël^t zinj.*

a T; I *quluam*. **b** T; I *lama*. **c** T; I *dan*. **d** T *eshkhounda*; I *eshkhundan*. **e** T; I *qzl*. **f** I; T *darëd*. **g** T; I *idistani* **h** T; I st. 3. **i** T; I *jamalun*. **j** I; T *sëstanbôl*. **k** I; T *hallaj* (first *l* struck through). **l** T; *jahi ina bad*. **m** T; I *varaqun narij*. **n** T; I st. 4. **o** T; I *jubla*. **p** T; I *t’et’ar*. **q** T; I *qadu*. **r** T; I *aqlum*. **s** T; I *ashkhundan*. **t** T; I *qizl*.

³⁰ T p. 36, in Armenian script; I fol. 22, in Georgian script; Araslî, p. 51, converted to Cyrillic. Other examples of the genre are to be found in T pp. 39 (in *d*), 41 (one stanza only, in *f*), 51 (in *sh*), 64 (I fol. 21A, in *f/p*), 98 (in *sh*).

*Jêhêl saiadnôva^u yarin^v sêvar ganj.
 jôvt'ak'i zilp'larun^w yar baghrua sanj.
 jabêrinan ôinian^x idmaz shesh u p'anj.
 jim^y usta sôilaram naval akhêr dinj.*

To thy servant, a raging torrent,^a beloved, do not oppose an obstacle.
 Thy beauty is a mirror, it gives life to the beech.^b
 For the love of a jewel, alas, I have become (worthless) bronze.
 I was a crimson goblet, sorrow has made me (cheap) European
 (glass)^c.

Nutmeg of India^d, thou art a purse of (fine) Tabrizi kid^e.
 From gazing on the jewel(-like beauty), I have become incurably-
 sick.

(But) thou art a medicine-casket^f from Istanbul, a cure is given.
 Thou art a hall of mirrors, thy leaf(-like cheek^g the colour of the)
 orange.

Beloved, wert thou mine, (I would gladly incur) a debt of a thousand
 tumans.

(Though already) shelling out for the infidel-impost^h, I would (gladly)
 pay taxes to (the tune of) a thousand tumans.

From (seeing) thee, the whole world sits in a beautifulⁱ meadow.

The world says, Her breasts, there are oranges!^j

u T; I *jahil saiat'nova*. **v** T; I *yari*. **w** I; T *zilip'larun* (giving verse of twelve syl-
 lables, but a slip of the tongue). **x** T; *jabrila onian*. **y** I *ch'im* (!!). **z** T; I *aval*
akhir.

a Lit. 'unbridled stream' (APTaz *jû*, TAz *gem*, *gâm*). **b** PT *zarang* '*tagus silvatica*' (R), a tree with bright foliage, especially the copper beech, from, or thought of as from, P *zar-rang* 'golden coloured'. Arasli amends to *pirinj* (P *piring*) 'copper', but mirrors in the 18th century were made of glass, not of bronze as in antiquity. **c** PT *firenj*, cf. T *firank altinî* 'debased gold' (R). **d** T *Hindustân jûzi* 'cocoa-nut, nutmeg' (R), surely the latter here, as something spicy and aromatic. **e** P *tîmâj* 'goat's leather', *tîmâj* 'cordoba leather of goat's skin', cf. *tumâj* 'purse made of cloth or silk' (S). **f** APT *jûna^h* 'small box or basket [casket?] covered with leather and used by apothecaries for dry drugs' (R). **g** Cf. P *waraq-i aftâb* 'leaf of the sun', 'the cheek of a mistress' (S). **h** APT *jizya^h* 'tribute, capitation-tax paid by Jews and Christians' (S). **i** *tîr'ar*, *t'et'ar*: P *tatrî* 'poppy' (also 'sumach used as a condiment', unlikely meaning here), S; or perhaps P *dîdârî* 'worthy of being seen' (*dîdâr* 'sight, vision', though this is otherwise written by SN as *didar*, H pp. 12, 22, 35). **j** PT *turanj*, *türünj* 'bitter orange, *citrus vulgaris* or *bigaradia*' (R), thus distinguished from the PT *nârenj* 'orange, *citrus aurantium*' (R) of st. 2 v. 4; the former supplied more images in Persian: *turanj-i zaqan* 'chin of a handsome boy or woman'; *turanj-i minbar* 'ornament of the pulpit in the shape of an orange'; *turanj zadan* 'throw an orange, generally made of gold, to each other (bride and bridegroom on entering the latter's house, a Persian marriage custom).

Gazelle, I have seen your figure, my mind trembles.^k
 May she respond (to me), the beauty. How^l shall I do my work?
 I am mad for her love, I speak nonsense.^m
 (In) thy magician's handsⁿ I have become but scarlet baubles.^o
 Silly Sayat'-Nova, thy beloved loves (only) wealth.
 Thy chestnut^p locks, Beloved, (weigh like) a stone on my chest.
 He who forces the play will not throw a six and a five.^q
 On the letter "J" I recite a peaceful^r *ävväl-akhîr*.[']

The above literal translation does not reflect the technical complexity of the Azeri original. Since *J* is a common sound in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, Sayat'-Nova's task was easier than that of Hasrat'yan, whose Armenian version³¹ is a *tour de force* that comes close to outdoing the master. However, Armenian being not too well endowed with native or ancient loanwords beginning and ending in *j*, he was forced to use 14 'Islamic' (i.e. Arabic and/or Persian and/or Turkish) words beginning in *j*-, 9 such words ending in *-j*,³² and one Georgian word beginning in *j*-; five of his 'beginning' words and eleven of his 'ending' words are plain Armenian, thus only 40% of the total number required. Hasrat'yan's translation is nowhere near literal, which would be an impossibility. An

k *vêj*, perhaps conn. Az *vijä* = *vij-vijä* 'trembling, shivering' (Ä). **l** TAz *nije, nijä*. **m** *t'êj*, perhaps P *tîj* 'twisted, squeezed' (S). **n** *jadubaz: jādūbāz* 'player with magic' (PT *jādu* 'witchcraft, magic', P *-bāz* 'playing') is not listed for PTaz, where the usual words are *jādūgar(i)*, *jādūgār(lik)*, but it is attested in Georgian *jadobazi* 'magician, conjurer' (Ch'MTsch); the word refers to one who *plays* with magic, a stage magician, conjurer; *alar-*, Az *äl-lär*. **o** T *zinj*, PT *sinj* 'cymbal, little beels suspended from Arabian drums, vermilion' (S), the last meaning possibly deriving from their colour, which SN gives as red above; it is possible that the reference is to a juggler's Indian clubs, which would be brightly coloured; the colour of blood is here suggested. **p** AT *jū'at, jüv'et, jüvvet* 'roan, dusty sorrel, or blackish chestnut colour in a horse' (R) — not only in a horse. **q** *shash u panj*, presumably thought of as a good throw at dice, e.g. at backgammon, though PT *shash-tâ* 'double six' would be better; here not in the meaning of 'confusion, perplexity' listed by S. **r** Az *dinj* 'quiet, peaceful, undisturbed' (Ä), perhaps with reference to the 'soft' sound *j*; T *dinç*, though presumably the same word, is defined as 'lively, fresh, strong, healthy' (Steuerwald): a semantic bridge is Az *dinjälmäk* 'rest, be quiet', defined as T *rahatlamak* (Ahundov, *Azerbaycan halk yazını örnekleri*, Ankara, 1978, p. 494) 'become comfortable' (R), 'feel better, experience relief' ('sich wohler fühlen, Erleichterung verspüren' (Steuerwald).

³¹ H p. 194, beginning *Jamalët hayli ê, mart'u kayrê oghj* 'Thy beauty is a mirror, it will burn a man completely up.'

³² In the body of two verses, thus not affecting the form, Hasrat'yan includes two such words (*javz* 'nut', used by SN as *jovz*, and PT *jigha-* 'plume'), which suggests an *embarras de richesse*.

English metrical version, though it can be no more literal, may not be irrelevant, as giving some idea of the effect in English of this genre of Azeri poetry:

Gem-like beauty, I drown, submerge!
Georgian maid, my passions rage!
Jesus, help! The billows surge!
Jet-black locks her brow encage.

Jug-jug, the Nightingale sings his dirge.
Jewel of Asia, still this urge!
Julep of roses, my sufferings purge!
Jesters ape me on the stage.

Jargoons round thy white neck range.
Joys departed my wits derange,
Juices once sweet turned sour and strange.
Jamshâsp,³³ help me! I am no sage!

Jealous rivals have driven a wedge.
Jilted, I roam at the desert's edge.
Jagged the rocks, and sere the sedge.
Judgement severe will be my wage!

Janglings on my brain impinge.
Jove's thunderbolts my mad heart singe.
Jackanapes Sayat'-Nova, cringe!
'J', enough! I have filled my page.

The above version is, of course, a mere pastiche. But it is fairly clear that Sayat'-Nova himself did not take the genre too seriously, his references to the beloved as an Indian spice, and to her breasts as oranges, to her interest in treasure, and to the Muslim poll-tax on Christians, which in the safety of Georgia he was certainly not called upon to pay, being surely meant as leg-pulls, in line with his occasional rôle as jester (*khumari var*). In any case, the poem can earn no great laurels. Perhaps the most original image is that of his being as it were tossed into the air by the Beloved like a juggler's crimson baubles, the colour no doubt suggesting blood, but nevertheless not as seriously as those images which elsewhere represent the lover as being cut up small and roasted like kebabs.³⁴ The word he uses for 'juggler, conjurer, magician', namely, *jadubaz*, literally 'player at magic', has more than a hint of malice, Georgian *jado* having in addition to the Persian meanings of *jâdû*

³³ Persian name for Solomon (S).

³⁴ *Nurmekantz' k'abab mi ani* 'Do not make kebabs (of me) again', *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun is*, st. 1 v. 3, I fol. 64, H p. 20.

'magic, juggling, conjurer' also the meaning of 'hag, monster',³⁵ a far cry from the metaphorical Persian usage as 'the eyes and eye-brows of a mistress' (S). It is perhaps not only the old Soviet Russian poetry police who would reject the poem with their favourite insult as 'formalist', for it has little to offer other than form, which is indeed its sole *raison d'être*. It is phonetics which dictate what thought there is, as, in fact, rhymewords may do in traditional verse, although there the result is often so effective that one has spoken of 'the miracle of rhyme'. But all form, whether it be a question of counting syllables, or arranging stress or quantitative metre in determined patterns, could be charged with leading thought a dance, in addition to dressing it up and using the music of the words to mesmerise the listener: *le poète mage*. But that is what largely distinguishes poetry from prose. One cannot therefore criticise Sayat'-Nova for juggling with sounds and letters: it is germane to running the hand up and down the neck of the fiddle to try out its scales and test its tone; anything additional is a bonus.

Another Azeri genre practised by Sayat'-Nova is that in which one syllable or word is constantly repeated (for European tastes *ad nauseam*) in various meanings, his so-called *t'ejnisi shahmohrla* 'allegory with royal pearl', e.g. that beginning *Khas nazani khas geindi khas khalat* 'The pure one has nobly donned a silken gown', in which *khas* is employed in three different meanings.³⁶ Also poems, which he calls in Azeri *dudagh degmā* 'let not the lips touch', in which all labial consonants are avoided: e.g. that beginning *Aziz agha qara et'ti ozi, nur ishi*

³⁵ 'Scheusal' (Tsch).

³⁶ T p. 18. *Khas* (APT *khâşş* 'special, personal, choice, noble', Steingass, 'pure, unmixed, fast (dye). the higher classes', Redhouse) is used by Sayat'-Nova in his Armenian and Georgian verse only as an epithet and noun for 'satin, silk' (cf. A *khâşş* also 'a kind of silk', Serjeant, *Islamic textiles*): e.g. *Hak'il is atlas, t'urlu zar u khas* 'You have donned satin, all kinds of gold and silk' (in *K'ani vur jan im*, st. 5, v. 1, Ioane, fol. 61A, H p. 44); *sheminakhe atlasit'a, khasit'a* 'You looked after me with satin and silk', in *Dameskhnebi*, st. 2, v. 4, I fol. 9, B p. 21 (Arm. tr. H p. 128, Russian tr. by Lipskerov, Gaysaryan, p. 199). It is just possible that in this Georgian verse there is an allusion to the Georgian usage of *khas-i*, apart from 'pure, pure silk, bold', as 'courtier' ('Höfling', Tschenkeli), one of the meanings in the Azeri verse. Hasrat'yan, p. 269, n. 73, calls this type of verse P *shumârah* 'computation', which seems too non-specific, all metrical forms being by definition computed (cf. Cl. Arm. *t'uelik* 'numbered-forms', i.e. 'verse, numbers'). Hasrat'yan has evidently misread Sayat'-Nova's P-T *shahmohr-la* which means 'with P *shâh-muhra* 'royal seal', 'precious stone said to be found in a serpent's mouth', Steingass, the idea apparently being that the chosen syllable is repeated throughout the poem like identical pearls strung on a necklace. Hasrat'yan is wrong in calling this poem, in which *p*, *b*, and *m* are freely used, *shrt'nabatz* 'recited with open lips', which describes the *dudagh degmā* category.

*nazani / got'urdi qoidi janat'ta *azallik' k'ishi nazani* 'The noble lord disgraced [*lit.* blackened] himself, the gracious one, the work of Light; He carried off, placed in Heaven, the gracious one, someone from past-eternity'.³⁷ There is no point in reproducing a text in full, and no translation can give much idea of the original. Such tricks, moreover, are not much more than mere virtuosity, in which sense limps after form. No doubt there are items of interest in these poems, but to appreciate them, there is no way other than reading them in the original. Great poetry, however, they are not likely to be.

The theme of his famous *Ode to his Violin*,³⁸ performed in 1759 and thus chronologically, though perhaps not intentionally, valedictory, provided an opportunity for the poet by vocalic variation to demonstrate the instrument's tonal versatility. Which to a large extent it does, the first stanza sounding

Amen sazi mech'en govats, dun t'amam tasn is, k'amanch'a.
nak'az mart'en k'iz ch'i tesni, dun n'era pasn is, k'amanch'a.
ghast ara, el lav oreru ediv'en hasnis, k'amanch'a.
k'iz indznitz' ov kana kh'eli, ashughi basn is, k'amanch'a.

'Praised among all instruments, you (score) a perfect ten (out of ten),
 k'amanch'a.

The Philistine fellow will not see you, you are taboo for him, k'amanch'a.
 Strive hard. You will see achieve still more good days, k'amanch'a.

Who can wrest you from me? You are the minstrel's bass [foundation string], k'amanch'a.'

The first and third verses each comprise all six vowels, *a, e, i, o, u, ě*; the second verse all except *o*; the fourth, with six shrill *i*'s, all except *e*. Verses containing the full complement of Armenian vowels are rare in Sayat'-Nova's œuvre, though they can be found, e.g.

*Akrek'et oskum'en sharats, p'eroshet mahang is anum*³⁹

'Your teeth are set in gold, you make your lips a touchstone',

³⁷ St. 1, v. 1, T p. 78. What is read above as *azallik' k'ishi* is written in the Georgian script as *azalk'i k'ishi*, intended for *azalik' k'ishi*?; *azalilik'*, T *ezelilik'* 'past eternity', R (from APT *azal* 'eternity (without beginning, opp. to *abad* 'eternity (without end)', S, 'past eternity', R) would be better Azeri, but **azalilik' k'ishi nazani* would give nine syllables for an octosyllabic hemistich, and only one *-l-* is written in what must be a defective form; for in reestablishing Sayat'-Nova's text one has to reckon with the poet's mistakes, more likely in Azeri to be morphological than metrical; perhaps *azali* (APT *azali*) *kishi* 'eternal being' or, like *nur ishi*, *azallik' ishi* 'work of eternity' is meant.

³⁸ T p. 134, I fol. 70A, H pp. 5-6. See above, pp. 207-210.

³⁹ *Patkirk'et ghalamov k'ashats*, st. 1, v. 4, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7.

in which the image is purely visual, though this need not mean that the vocalic variation in the musical *Ode to his Violin* is merely coincidental. Nor need one assume that such vocalic variation in the latter poem was conscious and deliberate rather than felicitously instinctive. And for all the vocalic variation, it is still the sonorous *a* which gives the main tone in this poem to an instrument the name of which comprises, like the name of its player, three broad *a*'s, so that the final *makhlaṣ* or signing-off sounds

K'ani sagh ê Sayat'-Noven, shat ban ku tesnis, k'amanch'a!

'As long as Sayat'-Nova has his health, you will see many (good) things, k'amanch'a!'

which, though comprising five of the six main vowels, has nine *a*'s. And, largely due to the fact that the name of the instrument features eight times as part of the *radîf* or recurrent compound rhyme, the Ode has 128 syllables in *a* out of 300, i.e. 42.7%, well above the average, which goes to demonstrate the poet's basic dependence on this vowel and justify the close attention paid to it above. What, however, must also be borne in mind is that as a singer and instrumentalist, Sayat'-Nova had other ways at his disposal of varying the chromatic effect of his verse. The quality of a vowel is often deliberately modified by a singer. For instance, it is easily observable that a soprano will open a high *i*, the closedness of which restricts the flow of air from the lungs, so that it becomes an *e*. Alas, we have no way of knowing the quality of Sayat'-Nova's singing voice, except that, by the testimony of T'eimurazi Batonishvili, who was too young to have heard it personally, it must have been melodious.

There are many examples to show that Sayat'-Nova was adept at consonantal assonance, or alliteration as page-bound critics call it: e.g. *sěmbul u susan* 'hyacinth and lily',⁴⁰ *p'ul-u-p'* and 'utterly ruined'.⁴¹ This device the poet uses to great effect in reproducing the audible stir caused by his beloved's entry:

*Ip' mětnum is mejlisuměn, shang shukhi-shabang is anum*⁴²

'When you enter the assembly, you spread beauty, alluring intoxication'

whereby the English translation loses the rustle, the *frou-frou*, of *shang shukhi-shabang*, the literal meaning of which is not crystal clear, it being

⁴⁰ *Patkirk'ēt*, st. 4, v. 1, *loc. cit.*

⁴¹ *Ėsor im yarin tesa* 'Today I saw my beloved', st. 2, l. 1, T p. 110, H p. 26.

⁴² *Patkirk'ēt*, st. 2, v. 4.

more important, however, to convey the excited hubbub of those who see the beloved appear. The poet compares the sound she makes with those of various musical instruments, conjuring up their characteristic voices with well-chosen sibilants and affricates:

*Ip' tighemet zhazh is gali, shěkhshěkhum is jighjighi pes.
Inch' konis sant'ur k'amanch'en, zugēt ch'ongur, ch'ang is anum.*⁴³

'When you move from your place, you jingle like a chain of (golden) coins.
What need have you of psaltery and fiddle? In your harmony you are a lute, you sound like a harp.'

Here again English is incapable of reproducing the sound-meaning of *zhazh*, *shěkhshěkhum*, *jighjighi*, *sant'ur*, *ch'ongur*, *ch'ang*. The onomatopoeic advantages, even in the field of zoology, of the numerous unvoiced, voiced, aspirate and non-aspirate Armenian affricates both of the *ts* and *ch* (chuintant) kind have been described elsewhere.⁴⁴ There is one verse in *Dastamazēt* 'Your coiffure'⁴⁵ which recalls both Verlaine's and Keats' autumnal lines, and the latter also as the singer of the Nightingale:

T'arametz'av karmir vart'ēn, baghēn bělbul ch'ê gali

'The crimson Rose has withered, to the garden the Nightingale will come no more.'

Here one has the alliteration of the *aram/arm* of *t'aram-* and *karmir*, partly echoed by the *ar* of *vart'ēn*, and the *b*'s of *baghēn* and *bělbul*, with seven sonorous *a*'s, and the long *i*'s and the *u*, in a verse comprising all the vowels except *o*. The verse thus has a deeply melancholy sound in keeping with the sentiment, and it recalls, in rhythm and feeling, Keats's *The sedge has withered by the lake, And no birds sing*. And the parallel is entirely apt, since Sayat'-Nova's beloved is also a *Belle Dame sans Merci*, who holds him in a fatal spell:

⁴³ *Ibid.*, st. 3, vv. 3-4.

⁴⁴ C.J.F. Dowsett, 'A Ghost goes West: Arm. *čiwat*, *čuāt*, Gypsy *čovax*-' , *Le Muséon*, t. 103, Louvain, 1990, pp. 347-365. The number of Greek names for cicadas and crickets has there been underestimated, and must be suppleted by details given in Ian C. Beavis, *Insects and other invertebrates in Classical Antiquity*, Univ. of Exeter: Exeter, 1988, pp. 62-69 (*akris/locusta*, 25 terms), 91-95 (*tettix/cicada*, 18 terms); the names (including *pharmakis* 'witch' and popular beliefs concerning the praying mantis (*mantis religiosa*, pp. 85-88) could be relevant to the development of the Armenian *čiwat* from 'cricket' to 'witch'. It may still be asserted, however, that the Greek names are not so phonetically expressive as the Armenian.

⁴⁵ St. 3, v. 1, T p. 117, H p. 34.

*T'ak' is mîrnim, dun sagh ėlis, ėshkhĕt im girizman ė.
Nazit mîrnim, naz mî ani, nazĕt indz ku spanĕ!*⁴⁶

'Let me die, so long as you may live. Your love is my grave.
I die for your charms. Do not cast a spell. Your charm will kill me!'

The tone of the poem is in keeping with the song of the Nightingale which, although Shakespeare's Petronius represents it as singing sweetly, and the Persians call it *hazâr* or *hazârân*, the bird of a thousand (varied) voices, is traditionally mainly felt to be deeply melancholy, expressive of the pain felt by the metamorphosed Philomela, eternally lamenting her violation at the hands of Tereus, the son of Ares, as recalled by John Lyly:

*What bird so sings, yet so does wail?
O 'tis the ravish'd nightingale.
Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu, she cries,
And still her woes at midnight rise.*⁴⁷

In *ashugh* literature the bird is not female, as it is in German (*die Nachtigall*), but male (as in Russian *soloveĭ*), a symbol of the unrequited lover, the errant minstrel, a *gharib bĕlbul* 'wandering nightingale'. Sayat'-Nova perceived it as a bird with a deep voice:

*Galobs t'ut'i, qazalakhi. bulbulis bani mindoda*⁴⁸

'The parrot squawks, and the magpie. I wanted the deep notes of the Nightingale'

he sings in Georgian, where *bani* means the bass voice, the sound that Sayat'-Nova associates with the deep voice of his violin: *ashughi basn is, k'amanch'a* 'You are the bass (foundation) string of the minstrel, k'amanch'a'.⁴⁹ This string is otherwise called in Persian *bâm* 'the thickest string or base of a musical instrument' (Steingass), Arm. *bamb*. The *ali* contrast of its antonym Arm. *zil* 'the highest string of a musical instrument', Georgian *zil-i* 'alto voice' (Tschenkeli: 'soprano' would be more apt), connected with PT *zîl* 'cymbals, castanets' (Steingass, Redhouse), is noteworthy in the present context. Since few would call the

⁴⁶ Refrain, vv. 4-5 of all five stanzas, *ibid*. It is difficult to render by one word in English the many overtones of P *nâz* 'glory, pride, boasting, blandishments, feigned disdain, gracefulness, dissimulation, delicacy, softness' (S), though many could be subsumed under coquetry.

⁴⁷ *Campaspe* (1584), V.1.

⁴⁸ St. 1, v. 1, I fol. 7, B p. 35. That 'the title Tûfî (literally, Parrot) is sometimes given to elderly ladies' (Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. iv, p. 301, n. 1) may or may not be relevant.

⁴⁹ *Amen sazi mech'ĕn*, st. 1, v. 4, T p. 134, I fol. 70A, H p. 5.

voice of the nightingale or the typical *kemence* or spike-fiddle low, there might be a clue here to Sayat'-Nova's own singing voice, which, if higher than that of his *k'amanch'a*, seems likely to have been that of a tenor, or even, like that of many modern singers of Turkish *şarkî* in contemporary Istanbul cabarets, alto.

Sayat'-Nova displays in all the three main languages in which he composed a mastery in that other branch of vowel and consonantal assonance, rhyme. Though all who can may not count as poets, a man who cannot exploit the natural harmonies of his language is like a musician who cannot play a chord. Milton eventually said that rhyme is 'no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse ... but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre',⁵⁰ and it was certainly a perverse act of Dryden to help him to conform to eighteenth-century (can one say?) taste to put *Paradise Lost* into rhyming couplets, as Pope did for Homer; but he who had once referred to 'lofty rhyme',⁵¹ and wrote how *The stars with deep amaze / Stand fixt in stedfast gaze*⁵² demonstrated the inconsistency of all writers other than cataloguers, and showed that he was not deaf to the music of what one major twentieth-century poet has called 'the miracle of rhyme'. Early Armenian verse, such as that of Gregory of Narek and the Armenian epic cycle *David of Sasun*, would have satisfied the older Milton in being rhythmic, but blank. In Sayat'-Nova's time, in the tradition in which he stood, which passed through that other great of Armenian literature, K'uch'ak Nahapet, of the 16th century, rhyme was a *sine qua non*. But whereas Milton might have been hampered by the necessity to fit his thought into particular phonetic patterns, rhyme in English, as Chaucer had long ago complained, being of 'suche paucitee', the languages in which Sayat'-Nova sang were not so deprived, having in this respect more in common with Italian, the resources of which enabled

⁵⁰ Preface to *Paradise Lost* (1667), 1668 ed. A similar view is amusingly expressed in the following century by the German physicist and philosopher Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, who thought that those who held that rhyme is the most important thing in poetry are like cattle-dealers who examine their wares from the rear (Die Leute die den Reim für das Wichtigste in der Poesie halten, betrachten die Verse wie Ochsen-Käufer von hinten, *Pfennigs-Wahrheiten, ein Lichtenberg-Brevier*, ed. R. Baasner, München, 1992, p. 47). No-one brought up on Greek and Latin verse can think rhyme essential. But poetry must have music and ornament. In Greek and Latin quantitative metre was sufficient, in Anglo-Saxon alliteration: but when there is no quantity, and alliteration palls, rhyme may supply the need of harmony.

⁵¹ *Lycidas* (1637), l. 1.

⁵² *On the morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629), l. 69.

Dante to write his gigantic epic in *terza rima*. The same facility of Armenian had allowed Gregory Magistros in the tenth century to write the history of the world as seen by Christians in over a thousand verses of monorhyme in *in*. The nominal and adjectival formations, and the declensional and conjugational endings of Georgian and Azeri, afford like opportunities, and Sayat'-Nova knew how to enhance his mood and meaning by exploiting them to the full. For there is more to rhyme than mere jingle. The hypnotic effect of repeated, monotonous sounds is well known — and rhyme by its very nature is literally mono-tone — as may be illustrated by anything from African drumming to Shakespeare's *hey-nonni-nonni-no*, the repetition of single verses or whole stanzas as refrains in ballads and folksongs, even by as sophisticated a poet as Goethe in his *Heidenröslein*, or, more crudely, with a mental stutter, in T.S. Eliot's *Because I do not hope to turn again / Because I do not hope / Because I do not hope to turn*.⁵³

Simple rhymes and repetitions are the main feature, and very effective, in a not too serious love-poem such as *Ch'is asum t'e latz' is êli*:⁵⁴

Ch'is asum t'e latz' is êli.

Barov tesa^a, im sirekan.

Vart'i něman batz' is êli

Kharerov,

Kharerov.

Barov tesa, im sirekan.

Ari me dardēs imatz'i.

Êshkhemet haman im latz'i.^b

Ôrēs êspes antz' ê katz'i

Dararov,

Dararov.

Barov tesa, im sirekan.

Ip' ku hak'nis al u atlas

Tesnoghin ku shinis'mas mas.

Doshit piti lal u almas

Shararov,

Shararov,

Barov tesa, im sirekan.

⁵³ *Ash Wednesday*, 1. Repetition is one of this poet's favourite devices (*Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels / Over the paving*, in *Coriolan*, I; *Give us a light / Light / Light*, in *The Family Reunion*, II.iii), so that one is tempted to wonder what would remain if one took all the repetitions out.

⁵⁴ T p. 130 (in Georgian script), H pp. 57-58 (transcribed); I fol. 62A (in Georgian script) has some minor variants, some of which are: **a** *tesank'*; **b** *iz k'izme shat im latz'i*; **c** *kshinis*; **d** whole stanza omitted.

Is k'iz govim khaghi mechĕn^d

Shamamnirĕt t'aghi mech'ĕn.

Man is gali baghi mech'ĕn

Yararov,

Yararov.

Barov tesa, im sirekan.

Sayat'-Noven vuntz' dĕnjana.

Ach'kirĕt ōske p'ĕnjan a.

Dushmani lizun mĕnjana

Ch'ararov,

Ch'ararov.

Barov tesa, im sirekan.

One will note the triple rhymes of vv. 1-3 of stanzas 2-5, with v. 2 of st. 1, *Barov tesa, im sirekan* repeated as a refrain at the end of each stanza, preceded by two trisyllabic verses (the rest being octosyllabic) that rhyme throughout the five stanzas. The refrain, literally 'I saw well, my beloved', is mischievously ambiguous, meaning 'I beheld you with goodwill, my beloved', and 'I saw well (what was going on), my beloved!'. A literal translation of the poem is

You (surely) do not say that you, too, weep.

I saw^a (it) well, my beloved.

Like a rose you blossomed,

With thorns,

With thorns,

I saw it well, my beloved.

Come, behold my agony.

I weep continuously for love of you.^b

How did I spend my day?

In sore straits,

In sore straits.

I saw it well, my beloved.

When you don scarlet and satin

You cut the beholder into pieces.

Your bosom needs rubies and diamonds

In rows,

In rows.

I saw it well, my beloved.

Let me praise you in the games,^c

Your honey-melons under the arches.

You promenade in the garden

With admirers,

a I 'we saw'. **b** I 'Because of you I have wept much'; **c** I omits this stanza.

With admirers.
 I saw it well, my beloved.
 How shall Sayat'-Nova rest?
 Your eyes are (as in) a golden goblet.
 May the tongue of the enemy be struck dumb
 With torments,
 With torments.
 I saw it well, my beloved.

An attempt to reproduce some of the rhyme-scheme and the tone of the poem in English has been made, as follows:⁵⁵

That thou weepest, thou canst not say!
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!
 Like the Rose thou bloom'st full gay,
 But with a thorn,
 Yea, with a thorn!
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!
 What torment is, that I've learned.
 With many a sigh for thee I yearned.
 Hopeless tears are all I earned,
 As I mourn,
 As I mourn.
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!
 Art thou in gold and scarlet dressed,
 Rubies and diamonds on thy breast,
 That beholder knows no rest
 That e'er was born,
 That e'er was born.
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!
 When I, poor minstrel, sing thy praise,
 Thine eye to another strays.
 Thou turn'st a deaf ear to my lays,
 So love-lorn,
 So love-lorn.
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!
 Sayat'-Nova, why dost thou stare?
 In a vessel of gold, her eyes are fair.

⁵⁵ CJFD in *Raft*, vol 2 (1988), where the final verses, amended above as more literal, read 'May foes' tongues wither in despair / With briars torn / With briars torn ...' The non-amended version is reprinted, together with 'To your pure form drawn by a master's hand' (*Patkirk'ēt ghalamov k'ashats*), 'I have a boon to crave' (*Me khosk unim ilt'imazov*), 'The illbred fellow that you bring to speak' (*Bedaslin vur khosetz'ēnis*), 'The world is a cage' (*Ashkharēs me p'anjara ē*), in *Selected Armenian poets*, ed. Samuel Mkrtychian, Samson: Erevan, 1993, pp. 58-62.

May enemies' tongues that illwill bear
 Be reft and torn,
 Reft and torn.
 I have seen thee, mistress mine!

The morphological possibilities afforded by the largely agglutinative Georgian language are exploited to the full in a similarly light-hearted piece:

*Shavo maqvalivit' t'valebiano,
 momkal, oghond mogrch'e, kavebiano.
 iakundo, almas-lalebiano,
 pirzed mokhdenilo khalebiano,
 t'irma mok'sovilo shalebiano,
 shavo maqvalivit' t'valebiano!*

(Baramidze, pp. 71-72)

'O thou with eyes black as blackberries,
 Slay me, as long as thou remainest, O thou with ringlets,
 O sapphire, O one with diamonds and rubies.
 O thou with beauteous moles upon thy face,
 O thou with soft woollen woven shawls,
 O thou with eyes black as blackberries!'

This monorhymed sestain is followed by three quintains (st. 3 is defective, lacking vv. 3 and 4) with the final verse rhyming with the first stanza with *khalebiano* 'O one with moles' (untypically lamely repeating a rhyme already used in the first stanza), *dzalebiano* 'O thou with (imperial) powers', *kvalebiano* 'O thou with beds (of roses)'. One great advantage of Georgian in respect of rhyming possibilities lies in its richness in preverbs that rhyme among themselves, so that the same basic verb can be used as the rhyme word, modified in meaning by the said preverbs: thus, *da-itsqos*, *ga-itsqos*, *sha-itsqos*, *ch'a-itsqos*, and the preverb *tsa-* (for *tsar-*) could also serve.⁵⁶ The rhyming possibilities of Armenian, itself not rich in preverbs that rhyme, apart from *ver-* and *ner-* (*neratsel*, *veratsel*), and *ar-* and *tar-* (*arberel*, *tarberel*) which would satisfy Sayat'-Nova's phonetic susceptibilities, lie in its many identical nominal formants and morphological endings (*-i*, *-in*, etc.). Azeri, with no active preverbs, has a similar advantage to Armenian, with its many postclitic particles (plurals in *lar/lär*, possessives in *-im/im*, *-in/in*, etc., verbal forms in *-yorum*, *-mez/maz*, *-sun/sün*, etc.).

⁵⁶ In *Zghvas vit' gaashrobs*, I fol. 16A, B pp. 29-30.

A major element in Sayat'-Nova's rhyme-schemes adopted from the Persians and Turks is the *radîf* or compound rhyme, in which the main rhyming syllables are followed by a number of syllables invariable throughout the poem which ride, as it were, behind the main rhyme (APT *radîf* means 'one who rides behind another on the same horse', another form of APT *ridf* 'person mounted behind another, anything following or placed behind another, who follows (a king) to war, etc.', Steingass). Hâfiz makes effective use of this potentially monotonous feature in a poem in which it is the point around which everything turns, so that the *radîf* is more in the nature of a refrain of which the meaning is ever subtly changing:

*Dard-i 'ashqî kashîdam, ke mapurs. Zahr-i hajrî chashîdam, ke mapurs.
gushté-am dar jihân va âkhar-i kâr dilbarî bar guzîdé-am, ke mapurs.*

'I have felt the pain of love, do not ask how. I have undergone the ache of separation, do not ask how.

I have wandered through the world, and in the end, I have chosen a mistress, ask not whom.'

The compound rhyme is repeated: *âb-i didé-am, ke ma purs* 'tears from my eye, do not ask how'; *sakhnânî shanîdé-am, ke mapurs* 'I heard words, do not ask what'; *lab-i la'î gazîdé-am, ke mapurs* 'I bit a ruby lip, do not ask which'; *ranjhânî kashîdé-am, ke mapurs* 'I suffered torments, do not ask which'. Until, in the seventh and final strophe, after these sentiments which are so often echoed, though less outspokenly, by Sayat'-Nova, the most mischievous use of the *radîf*:

Hamchû Hâfiz, gharîb dar râh-i 'ashq, ba-maqâmî rasîdé am, ke mapurs!

'Like Hâfiz, a wanderer along the paths of Love, I reached my goal, ask not where!'⁵⁷

An example of Sayat'-Nova's use of the *radîf* is afforded by one of his most popular Odes, one in fact which Hasrat'yan ranks second in his choice of his seven most excellent (*amenabardzrorak*) chefs-

⁵⁷ Persian text in Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 26, p. 60, with a tasteful verse translation by John Haddon Hindley, *ibid.*, pp. 109-110. Arberry notes (p. 165) that 'it would appear from the form of the signature that this poem, like some others, was written by Hâfiz for singing by a famous minstrel; hence the poet's reference to himself in the third person'. But the 'like Hâfiz' is possibly part of the jest: one should not ask who the fortunate lover was. Arberry notes also, 'the lyric clearly belongs to the poet's early life, and is perhaps the simplest in the *Divan*'. It is simple in the way that Goethe's *Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh*' is simple, and by that very fact so clearly a work of genius. Its charm is irresistible, which is largely the reason it is treated at length above; but it is not entirely irrelevant to the themes, and often the style, of Sayat'-Nova.

d'œuvres:⁵⁸ *Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi* 'In this world I shall utter no sigh'.

Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi, k'ani vur jan is indz ama.

Anmahakan jērov lik'ēn ōske p'enjan is indz ama.

Nēstim, vēres shēvak' anis, zarbab vēran is indz ama.

Such's imatz'ir, ēnents' ēspane, Sult'an u Khan is indz ama.

Mech'kēt salb u ch'inari pes, řangēt p'ērangi atlas ē.

Lizut shak'ar, pēroshēt ghand, akřek'ēt mark'rit almas ē.

Osku mech'ēn mina arats, ach'kirēt aknakap t'as ē.

Patvakan angin javayir, lal-Badeshkhan is indz ama.

Is ēs dardin vuntz' dimanam, makam sirtēs unim k'arats.

Artsunk'ēs arun shīnetz'ir, khilk'ēn gēlkhes unim tarats.

Nur bagh is, nur baghch'i mech'ēn bolork'ēt vart'ov ch'ap'arats.

Vēret shuř gam bēlbuli pēs, sirov seyran is indz ama.

K'u ēshkhēn indzi mast arav, is zart'un im, sirts ē k'ēnats.

Ashkhars ashkharov kēshtatz'av, im sirtēs k'iznitz' sov mēnatz'.

Yar, k'iz inch'ov t'arip' anim, ashkharumēs ban ch'ē mēnatz'.

Krake tsovement dus ēkats, Řash u jeyran is indz ama.

Inch' ku'li mek hidēs khosis, t'e vur Sayat'-Novu yar is.

Shukhkēt ashkhar(ē) bērnil ē, aregagi demēn p'ar is.

Hutov hil, mikhak, darich'in, manishak susanbar is.

Karmēragun dashti tsaghik, hovtatz' shushan is indz ama.

A literal translation of this would be:

In this world I shall sigh no sigh, since you are life-and-soul for me.

Filled with immortal(ising) water, You are a golden cup for me.

When I sit, you give me shade: you are a silken tent for me.

If you understand me to sin, slay me for it: you are Sultan and Khan for me.

Your figure is like the poplar and the cypress, your complexion is like European satin.

Your tongue is sugar, your lips are candy, your teeth pearls and diamonds.

Like blue-beads set in gold, your eyes are a begemmed cup.

Precious, priceless jewel, you are a Badeshkhan ruby for me.

How can I withstand this torment, when my heart is pelted so with stones?

You have turned my tears to blood, reason is taken from my head.

⁵⁸ H p. xx. In first position is *Patkirk'ēt* 'Thy image'. In 3rd to 7th position respectively are: *K'ani vur jan im* 'As long as I live'; *Khoskīrēt malum im ari* 'I have understood thy words'; *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a word to say, a request'; *Bēlbuli hid latz' is ēli* 'Like the Nightingale you, too, weep'; *Dun ēn gēlkhen imastun is* 'You are so very wise'. It is doubtless rash of an *otar* to query the taste of native Armenians, but one might think that *K'amanch'a*, which Hasrat'yan places in his second division (but includes in his edition as no. 1), deserves promotion, even at the expense of increasing the mystic seven to eight.

You are a new(ly planted) garden, the middle plot of which is measured round by roses.

Over you like a nightingale would I wander: you are a vision of Love for me.

Love for you has made me drunk: I am awake, but my heart is numb.

This world is crammed with people, but my heart is starved of you.

Beloved, with what shall I praise you, in my world nothing remains (that I could use as a fitting image).

Risen from a sea of fire, you are Râsh [Rustahm's steed] and gazelle for me.

How would it be if you would speak to me, saying you are Sayat^c-Nova's beloved?

Your splendour has enveloped the world, your glory vies with the sun.

Fragrant cardamon, cloves, cinnamon, rose, violet, water-mint,

Crimson blossom of the plain, you are the shepherds' lily for me.

An attempt to produce the rhyme-scheme in English might run:

I sigh no sighs, for you are both life and **soul for me**.

Full of the water of life, you are a golden **bowl for me**.

You shade me where I sit, you are a leafy **knoll for me**.

If I sin, you are my Sultan, and may take your **toll of me**.

Your tongue is sugar, your teeth are pearls, like the poplar proud you stand.

Your lips are candy, and your complexion is as satin, white silk from Frankish land.

Your eyes are two azure gems, jewels set in a golden band.

You are a ruby from Badeshkhan, a fiery **coal for me**.

How can my heart, so sore bombarded, withstand this cruel pain?

You have turned my tears to blood, driven reason from my brain.

In your young garden there are roses, fenced around by sugar-cane.

Over you like the Nightingale I would fly, a yearned-for **rôle for me**.

Love of you has made me drunk, my heart is numb and blue.

The world is full of people. I am starved of you.

With what shall I praise you? What words of mine will do?

From a sea of fire arisen, you are an untamed **foal for me**.

Could it be you would speak with me, as the love of Sayat^c-Nová?

Your splendour illuminates the world, you outshine the bright day-star.

Fragrant cinnamon, cardamon, cloves, violet and rose you are.

Golden blossom of the plains, you are a **tournesol for me**.

Unfortunately, the strain of devising so many rhymes in English strikes plainly through, and much of the technical naturalness, not to speak of the charm, of the original is lost in such translations, the only merit of which may lie in underlining, by contrast, the skill of the poet's original.

Radîfs come naturally to his Azeri verse:

Hämishä ashîqlar qeybätindäsän.
O bäd ämälindän yanîgham yanîq.
Rövshäni günäshdir, şö'lä yaydırır,
*O mah jamalindan yanîgham yanîq.*⁵⁹

'You are always the object of the minstrels' slander.
 On account of your bad actions I burn and burn.
 Your radiance is a sun, you spread brightness.
 From the beauty of the moon I burn and burn.

The *radîf* is repeated as the final verse of the four following quatrains: *gizlin khiyalindan yanîgham yanîq* 'From a secret dream I burn and burn'; *dishin jilalindan*⁶⁰ *yanîgham yanîq* 'from the splendour of your teeth I burn and burn'; *siyah khalindan yanîgham yanîq* 'from your black mole I burn and burn'; *hamishä alirdan yanîgham yanîq* 'ever from your scarlet (ways) I burn and burn'. Thus the *radîf* consists of seven syllables riding after the main rhyme in *-al/äl*.

The Georgian poem *Sop'els da sop'els shua* 'Between one world and another' likewise displays a *radîf* of seven syllables, but occurring not six times as in the Azeri poem, but nine:

Sop'elsa da sop'elsa shua mt'as amboben, mart'alia.
shens baghch'ashi vardi hqvavis, mas amboben, mart'alia.
bulbulebi t'k'venis baghis gzas amboben, mart'alia.
ch'ini-mach'inis khelmtsip'is das amboben, mart'alia.
*bevri k'veqana minakhavs, zghas amboben, mart'alia.*⁶¹

'Between one world/village and another there is a mountain, they say: it is true.
 In your garden the rose blossoms, so they say: it is true.
 In your garden the nightingales (are) on their way, they say: it is true.
 Of the Emperor of China and Central Asia you are the sister, they say: it is true.
 I saw ten thousand countries; they say (they're like) the (dangerous?) sea: it is true.'

⁵⁹ The above is transcribed into normal Azeri, largely as the Cyrillic of Arasli, p. 45; the Armenian script of T reads *Hamashay ashughlar ghayibat'indaysan / o bad amalund(a)n yanugham yanugh / urshani gunashtur shohlay ayidari(r) / o mah jamalundan yanugham yanugh*, p. 61.

⁶⁰ Arasli amends this (in any case better read *jalâl*, not *jilâl* the plural of *jull* 'housings, horse-coverings', S) unacceptably as *zaval*- 'misfortune' (Azizbäy).

⁶¹ B pp. 27-28; I fol. 6, with the minor variants, v. 2 *gashlila* 'has unfolded' for *hqvavis* 'blossoms', v. 5 (his v. 4), *ginakhams* (unexpected present stem) 'you see' for *minakhavs* 'I see', his v. 5 (and H p. 118) = B v. 4.

The following four quintains are composed each of four monorhymed quatrains followed by a verse with the *radîf*: *amashi shua motsame tz'as amboben, mart'alia* 'Amid this (torment I am) a martyr (destined) for Heaven, they say: it is true'; *ch'emsâ garda otz'daorsa skhvas amboben, mart'alia* 'Apart from me there are twenty-two others, they say: it is true'; *ch'amsvleli veghar amova, chas amboben, mart'alia* 'he who has gone down there does not come out again, it is a well, they say: it is true'; *Sayat'novas Gurgen Khanis qmas amboben, mart'alia* 'They say Sayat'-Nova is the serf of Gurgen Khan: it is true.'

This *radîf* form of rhyme is adopted by Sayat'-Nova, indirectly from Persian, directly from Persia's Azeri poetic heirs, and in the matter of what counts as a rhyme, the Armenian poet is deeply influenced by Persian and Azeri practice. *susani / kes ani / tesani*⁶² would not count in some traditions, e.g. English and German,⁶³ as rhymes, in that they end in identical, rather than rhyming, syllables. Such forms are, however, admitted as rhymes in Persian: e.g., in Hâfiz, *tâ b(a)kujâ / âftâb kujâ / shitâb kujâ / 'itâb kujâ*.⁶⁴ In French, as represented e.g. by Verlaine, even identical phonetic entities count as rhymes, so long as they are homophones, i.e. semantically discrete (*fîn* 'fine (adj.)', *fîn* 'end', etc.). With regard to the metrical elision of *-a-* in Hâfiz *tâ b(a)kujâ*, Sayat'-Nova similarly allows himself this liberty, as in Azeri *qalsîn* 'may it stand' / *tal(a)sîn* 'may it plunder'.⁶⁵ The admissibility of such elision permits the suppletion of a missing rhyme in *Ajab k'ani zhamanak ê* 'Can one know how much time?', in which one may, as a rhyme to *zanjap'ilên* 'ginger' and *gharanp'ilên* 'clove', fairly confidently suggest *dandân-(i) p'ilên* 'ivory' (as the material of a comb or other cosmetic instrument).⁶⁶

⁶² *K'iz saz gu ka al qumashên* 'Silken cloth suits you', st. 5, vv. 1-3, Hasrat'yan, p. 72, I fol. 59 (*tisani*, lapsus calami).

⁶³ Nor usually in Russian, though occasionally in Pushkin (*raskalënnõi / ozhivlënnõi / blagosklonniï / polusonnii*, in *Puteshestvie Onegina*, st. inc. Byvalo, ed. A. Saakyantz, Moscow, 1959, p. 343).

⁶⁴ *Şalâh-kâr kujâ* 'Where is the pious man?', vv. 1, 4, 6, 7, etc., ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 2, p. 38).

⁶⁵ *Bas deilar dunia vaqia imi(sh)* (Georgian script, i.e. *Bäs deyirlär dünya vaqiä imish*) 'Do they not say that the world is a dream?', st. 2, vv. 1-2, *Tetrak*, fol. 89 (tr. Hasrat'yan, p. 161); the second rhyme is written as *talsin*, but this is an impossible form from Az. *talamaq* 'plunder'. The words were intended to rhyme with v. 3, but the final word of this verse, irrefutably supplied by Arasli, p. 31, as *alsîn* 'may it take', is missing from T (by homoioarche, the preceding word being *alina/älinä*).

⁶⁶ St. 2, vv. 1-3. H p. 38, supplies *hutov hilên* 'fragrant cardamon', which does not rhyme.

It is a fact that the present century appears to have lost sight of, but verse calls for measure, that is, metre. In this domain Sayat'-Nova shows great versatility. As in the matter of rhyme-schemes, his ultimate debt to Persia is great. The most important of his songs, the major Armenian odes, are in a form he himself calls in Georgian *qazal-i*,⁶⁷ i.e. Persian *ghazal*, usually a love-poem, a genre in which Persia's leading poet Ḥâfiz excelled — as does Sayat'-Nova, who would certainly qualify for the designation *ghazil* 'poet, writer of erotic poetry, one who makes love to women' (Steingass), and who uses the word in three Azeri poems.⁶⁸ But these major Odes cannot count as ghazals. It is impossible for Armenian and Georgian (or for Sayat'-Nova's Azeri) to reproduce the exact form of a Ḥâfiz *ghazal*, with its various quantitative metres. They could, however, imitate it in syllabic verse. Most of Ḥâfiz's *ghazals* consist of long monorhymed verses composed of two hemistichs of four feet each of four long or short syllables, the final foot often cataleptic and comprising three syllables; e.g. $\cup - - - / \cup - - - / \cup - - - / \cup - - -$; $\cup - \cup - / \cup \cup - - / \cup - \cup - / \cup - \cup - / \cup \cup - -$; $\cup \cup - - / \cup \cup - - / \cup \cup - - / \cup \cup -$. Thus a typical Ḥâfiz hemistich (which would itself count as a complete verse in Sayat'-Nova) consists arithmetically of sixteen or fifteen syllables, and it is for this reason that the typical verse in Sayat'-Nova's odes consists of fifteen (one of his hemistichs of 8 followed by 7 — that the Byzantine *versus politicus* likewise comprises fifteen syllables appears to be coincidental) or (more rarely) sixteen (8 + 8). In a Ḥâfiz *ghazal*, the first two hemistichs of his long complete verses of 30 or 32 syllables rhyme with each other, and with each subsequent complete verse, the first hemistich of which is unrhymed. Thus, with hemistichs of sixteen syllables, in a very regular metre (that some short syllables are to be counted metrically long does not affect the syllable count), one of Ḥâfiz's most famous *ghazals* addressed to the Persian equivalent of Horace's *puer*.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Indz sirez'ir, êshkhên ėngar, khaghi davt'ar im k'iz ama*, T p. 131, H p. 36; *Askharumës akh ch'im k'ashi*, T p. 116, H p. 37.

⁶⁸ *Gulagh asun, ayi(gh) ghazil(l)ar* 'Lend an ear, sober lovers' (reading text *ayi* as Az. *ayiq*, Arm. script -*gh* dropped owing to following initial *gh-* of *ghazil(l)ar*), T fol. 1 (second poem); *Qulagh asun bas bandia qazil(l)ar* 'Lend an ear then to yours truly, O lovers', T p. 100, Georgian script (cf. *Qulagh asun bas bandia aghalar* 'Lend an ear then to yours truly, gentlemen', T p. 96, I fol. 31 (*baz* perhaps for Az. *bizä* 'to us'), Arasli, p. 26 (who reads the word as *män* (*bändäyâ*), 'to me (your humble) (servant)', For dialectal *g-* for Az *qulag*, see above, p. 190.

⁶⁹ In *hazaj muthamman sâlim* 'perfect octopedal hazaj' ($\cup - - -$ eight times repeated per verse acataleptic); *Badeh sâqî may-i bâqî*, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 3, p. 39.

*Agar ân turk- / -i Shîrâzî / ba-dast ârâd / dil-i mârâ
 ba-khâl-i Hin- / -dawî-sh, ba-chashm(-i) / Samarqand û / Bukhârârâ
 Ba-deh sâqî / may-i bâqî / ki dar jannat / na-khâhî yâft
 kanâr-i âb- / -i Ruknâbâd / va gulgasht-i / Masallârâ*

'If that Turk(ish beauty) of Shiraz takes my heart in her hand
 by her Indian mole, by her eye of Samarqand and Bukhara,
 Pour me, cupbearer, that pure wine that you will not find
 on the watery banks of Ruknabad or the Rose-walk of Masalla.'

Sir William Jones's iambic paraphrase has the virtue of preserving the octosyllabic structure:

Sweet maid, if thou woulds't charm my sight,
 And bid these arms thy neck infold;
 That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
 Would give thy poet more delight,
 Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
 Than all the gems of Samarcand.⁷⁰

One might think little else. But published in 1771, in the lifetime of our Caucasian minstrel, it might have relevance as an example of 18th century European taste with which to compare that of the latter.

Since, despite his boast that he introduced the Georgian court to Persian ways (to which in any case it had long since been introduced), Sayat'-Nova is unlikely to have been influenced directly by Persian poetry in the original, but more likely by the Turkish poetry of his time, it is instructive to look at the form the ghazal took in the hands of, say, his contemporary Ottoman poet, Mehemmed Emin Belîgh of Larissa, who died in the year of Sayat'-Nova's retirement, 1172 H (A.D. 1758/9).⁷¹ A ghazal on a cupbearer theme similar to Hâfiz's begins:

*ol âl fas kâkül üzere bark-i güldir sünbül üstünde
 izarında 'araq gûya ki sebnemdir gül üstünde.
 düşülden sâgar-i lebrîze 'aks-i ğabğab-i sâqî
 habâb-i bâde âsâ gözlerim kaldı mül üstünde.⁷²*

'That scarlet fez on her locks is a rose-leaf on a hyacinth.
 The perspiration on her cheek is like evening dew upon the rose.
 Since the reflection of the cupbearer's chin fell in the brimming bowl,
 Like the bubbles in the cup my eyes are fixed upon the wine.'

⁷⁰ *A grammar of the Persian language*, cit. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁷¹ E.J.W. Gibb, *A history of Ottoman poetry*, ed. E.G. Browne, London, (1905), vol. IV, pp. 117-134.

⁷² Gibb, *ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 279.

The Persian quantitative metre has gone. The hemistichs each count 16 syllables, with irregular caesurae (7 + 9, 8 + 8, 9 + 7, 7 + 9). Gibb's translation ingeniously preserves the syllable count, and regularises the metre by caesurae after the eighth syllable:

The red fez lieth on her locks, like rose-leaf upon jacinth rare:
The perspiration gems her cheeks, like dewdrops upon roses fair.
Since shone the cupbearer's bright chin, reflected in the brimming bowl,
Mine eye on the wine are fixed, e'en like the bubbles floating there.⁷³

In converting Persian quantitative metre to syllabic, Sayat'-Nova does better than Belîgh. In the Persian ghazal style he composed five poems he calls, not *ghazal*, but *divani*, i.e. Persian *dîwânî* 'belonging to a court (*dîwân* 'a royal court, tribunal of justice'), a courtier, a poet laureate, etc.' (Steingass). Sayat'-Nova must be using the word as an epithet of the *dîwân* in the sense of 'a collection of poems' (as the *Dîwân* of Hâfiz, his collected poems), or 'a miscellaneous collection from different authors', but nowhere in Persian or Turkish does it denote the ghazal form to which Sayat'-Nova attaches it. Two of his *divanis* are in Armenian, one concerning *Sha(h)-khat'ay*, and five in Azeri, all concerning the *Sha(h)-khat'ay*. The five Azeri ghazal/divanis are placed at the head of all others in the *Tetrak* in Armenian script, and unlike any other begin with an inked zoomorph initial (*D*);⁷⁴ the Armenian *Sha(h)khat'ay* ghazal is there⁷⁵ enclosed in an inked border imitating a cloth fringe, thus as it were laid as a doily on the page, and is accompanied by an annotation recommending it as especially worthy of performance. This must show that Sayat'-Nova was particularly proud of them, though there can be little other than the form, if even that, to lend them any distinction. The said Armenian *Sha(h)khat'ay* ghazal consists of verses of fifteen syllables with a caesura after the eighth (8 + 7), the rhyme-scheme, comprising radifs, after the Persian model:

Shat sirun is Sha(h)khat'ay asoghin khar ch'is ani.
anjagh gëtz'is êshkhi mech'ën hid k(e)has, k'ar ch'is ani.
Êshkhën h(e)sti kër(a)k uni, muntz' ku êrvî, muntz' kert'a.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 123.

⁷⁴ *Dedilar k'i shakha(t'a)yi ch'aghërram, hagh, madat'*, p. 1; *Dedilar k'i shakhhat'ayi ch'aghïroram (hagh madat' crossed out) shahi shah*, p. 2; *Dedilar k'i shakhhat'ayi êli alam yaradan*, p. 3; *Dêdilar k'i shakhhat'ai khêi alip' rêi alip' bêi*, pp. 3-4; *Dêdilar k'i shakhhat'aia khabarun var alamdân*, p. 4.

⁷⁵ P. 102. The ghazal/divani on p. 103 is written in a macaronic mixture of Armenian and Georgian script. It is described in the Georgian annotation as 'good', but is irregular in that v. 3 (the equivalent of the first hemistich of the Persian v. 2) rhymes.

t'eguz ningnim tsovi meč'ēn, hovnalū char ch'(i)s ani.
*Bas*⁷⁶ *ashughēn muntz*⁷⁷ *dimana et'k'u tēvatz ketsakun.*
dun ink'nakal t'ak'avur is, b(e)hubazar ch'is ani.
T'e vur sarerun handipis, ku halis mumi nēman.
t'e vur k'aghak' tigh h(a)ndibis, ku k'andis, var ch'is ani.
Iski behubazar ch'uni, Sha(h)khat'aia ch'asoghēn.
endu hamar, Saiat'no(v)a, shat eit'ibar ch'is ani.

'You are very lovely, you will present no thorn to him who calls you Shah-Khat'ay ("Emperor of China").⁷⁸

No sooner have you plunged him into love than you go with him, you will throw no stone.

Love has such fire! How it burns! How it spreads!

Though I dive into the sea, you will give me no remedy to cool me down.

Tell me, how shall the singer of love withstand the sparks you give off?

You are autocrat, king, you will indulge in no bargaining.⁷⁹

If you encounter mountains, you will melt them away like wax.

If you encounter a town, you will demolish it, you will allow it no existence.⁸⁰

He has no bargaining power, he who does not say 'O Shah-Khat'ay!'

(But even) for that, Sayat'-Nova, you do not inspire much confidence!'

The ghazal is followed by a note, first in Georgian — '(By) Ch(rist's divinity), this divani is very [*khist* from Arm., "terribly"] good' — then continuing in Armenian, 'He who would learn it should say a "(Lord) have mercy", and going on to describe how he became a minstrel and learned "by the power of St. John the Baptist" to become proficient on three instruments', which must indicate the particular affection he had for this (judged on Hâfiz standards) trite composition. Outside the frame of the poem, on all four sides, there are Georgian characters that read,

⁷⁶ The text has here a metrically and semantically otiose *o*.

⁷⁷ The initial is a combination of Georgian *m* (above) and *v* (below), the scribe 'correcting' *vuntz'*, the Tiflis equivalent of the more usual, but itself dialectal, Eastern Armenian *vontz'* 'what'; the initial of *muntz'* must be a labial variation.

⁷⁸ Reading *Shâh-i Khaṭâ'î*. See below, Chapter Eight, pp. 355-362 for a full discussion of this term.

⁷⁹ *b(e)hubazar* must be P **bai' û bâzâr*, an equivalent unlisted in the usual dictionaries for APT *bai' û sharâ* 'buying and selling, commerce', an activity from which royal personages take care not to be seen directly to profit. The term is not used especially pejoratively here, or in v. 9, where it appears to be recommended, but elsewhere Sayat'-Nova does not rate the trader (possibly as distinct from the artisan, see above, Chapter One, p. 11) highly: *Akhir bu eshkh mani jalal eileir. Salup'tur bazara dala eileir* 'In the end this love makes me gross. It sends me to the market-place and makes me a hawker' (*Bu ashughlugh* 'This minstrelsy-business', T p. 80, above p. 185).

⁸⁰ T *vâretmek* 'cause to be present, create' (Hony).

starting from the bottom and proceeding clockwise, *ma*, *j*, *u*, and a badly written *n*, in which something of significance has rightly been sought, but hitherto without success.⁸¹ It is doubtless G *majun* ‘electuary’, Az *mājun* ‘paste, sweetmeat’, and describes the poetic offering on the doily. The word occurs as Arm *majum* (required and perhaps dictated by the rhyme) in ‘I cry Lalanin’ as a product of Europe, describing the beloved’s fragrance (see p. 104, n. *m*). The ghazal form is employed in Persian and Turkish not only for light love-songs, but for religious odes, such as Ḥāfiẓ’s ‘What tidings of union with thee, that I may rise from the dust?’⁸² Whereas Sayat’-Nova’s other *Shahkhatay* ghazals are devoted to secular love, one uses the title for God, whereby the poet may be suggesting a Persian **Shâh-i khodâi* ‘Divine King’, in the manner in fact in which Ḥāfiẓ plays on the two meanings of *khaṭâ* ‘Cathay’ and ‘error’;⁸³

Dedilar k’i Sha(h)khat’ai êli alam yaradan
Yokhdan var êt’tun duniani salam k’alam yaradan.

Sanun nigardarlughinan ghulam p’arvaz ustadun
p’ir dēva{m}miskin verubtur eshkh manum saz ustadun.

Ach’tum haghghat’ ghap’isin ich’misham ghasadini
okhumisham YEI ALIP’ REI ALIP’ BEI, yaz ustadun.

Hark’im ustadî(ni) soilar ona rahmat’ soilaram
naghadar k’i arsha et’sam degulam t’oz ustadun.

Hark’im ha{m}ghghat’tan soilar o bab olur maninan
ona ozumdan diaram ghat’manam sôz ustadun.

Saiad Nova rahmat’ êila ustadua p’irua
*shor ghat’maginan sôzua olursan goz ustadun.*⁸⁴

⁸¹ H pp. 234-5, attempts to read *u* and *m* as numbers indicating a date (*u* ‘400’ + *m* ‘40’), 400 of the chronicon, i.e. A.D. 1752, and *n* for the month of November (which Sayat’-Nova was more likely to refer to by its Georgian name of *Giorgobist’ve* or *Tiriskoni* than *Noemberi*, Arm. *Noember*), all of which is mercifully put out of its misery by the *j* ‘9,000’, for which he can offer no explanation. He rejects the slightly more feasible *Majnun*, counting the *n* twice.

⁸² *Mizhda-i waşl-i tû kû k’az sar-i *khâk bar khezam*, Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 32, p. 65, who for *khâk* ‘dust’ has *jân* ‘soul, life’, though Gertrude Bell’s ‘dust’ (*cit. ibid.*, p. 116) indicates the homoiomorphous *khâk*.

⁸³ See below, Chapter Eight, p. 362, n. 151.

⁸⁴ T p. 3; Arasli, p. 63, has taken many liberties with the text, e.g. inserting an *öz* in v. 3 to rhyme with his *söz* (text *saz*). The poem is followed by a couplet rhyming in *-ani*, mentioning the *dilbar* or ‘beloved’, which has metrically and thematically nothing to do with the ghazal. Hasrat’yan’s Armenian verse translation (p. 198) is only approximate.

'They said, *Shâh Khatâ'î* [Emperor of China], his hand holds
 the world, Creator.
 Thou madest the world out of nothing, Creator of
 Everything [*lit.* peace and word].
 I am the servant of thy (cosmic) picture-gallery,
 thy protection-master [curator].⁸⁵
 (My) spiritual-teacher offers up a poor prayer: I am Love, music-master.
 I have opened the door of truth, I have drunk
 its morning-draught.
 I have read Y A R A B [O Lord God], (as)
 writing-master.
 To everyone saying the 'Thou art master', I shall say
 '(Lord have) mercy!'
 However near I attain to the Throne (of God),⁸⁶
 I am not (anything): master of dust.
 Everyone who says 'From the Truth', he becomes
 a Bâb [Gateway to God, a saint] for me.
 To him I shall say from my heart, I shall not add
 anything, (as) master of the word.
 Sayat'-Nova, say a 'Lord have mercy' to thy master,
 to thy spiritual-teacher,
 Adding no confusion to thy words, if thou be
 master of the eye.'

The above translation can be only tentative, but may at least serve to
 coax a more accurate version from a competent turcologist. The
 poet has managed to maintain the outward form of a ghazal, for
 what that is worth. Though the language is as fitted for the form as Azeri
 and Armenian, there are no extant Georgian ghazals by Sayat'-Nova.

Although four of Sayat'-Nova's Armenian odes are annotated as
 ghazals in the *Tetrak*⁸⁷ and it is possible that this is meant, particularly

⁸⁵ *parvaz* (P *parwâz* 'flight') is inappropriate here, a master of aeronautics being anachro-
 nistic, though Hâfiz does express a wish to rise like a holy flier or angel from the snares and
 delusions of the world (*tâ'îr-i quds-am va az dâm-i jihân bar khezam*, Arberry, *op. cit.*,
 no. 32, v. 1, second hemistich, p. 65). S.N. must mean *parvar* (P *parwâr* 'education', or more
 likely *parwar* 'nourishing, protecting' though this ought to be used only as the latter part of
 a compound), which suggest that he heard the word with the final Turkish and Armenian
 unrolled lingual reflexed sibilant -r (cf. Czech ř) which sounds like the -z required by the
 rhyme (conversely, there are European maps which write T *deniz* 'sea' as *denir*).

⁸⁶ Reading *arsha* as the dative of APT 'arsh 'Throne of God'; *et'sam* is to be read as
 Az. *yetsâm* (*yetmāk* 'reach, be sufficient'), Az. *etmāk* 'make, do' being written, as in v. 2,
 with 'long' (non-protheticised) ê.

⁸⁷ *Is me gharib bêbuli pes*, T p. 107; *Indz siretz'ir, êshkhên êngar*, T p. 131;
Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi, T p. 116; *Indz u im sirekan*, T p. 127.

by the description of one of them being described as *hangi qazali*⁸⁸, to refer only to the syllabic verse count (8 + 8) — they and the other principal odes are composed mainly in *murabbaʿ*, or quatrains, that is a poem consisting of usually five quatrains, the first in monorhyme, the subsequent quatrains consisting of three verses in different monorhyme with the fourth verse rhyming with the first quatrain (thus, AAAA, BBBA, CCCA, DDDA, EEEA), many rhymes being with *radif*. Sayatʿ-Nova or his annotators do not use this APT expression to describe this form, probably because it is too common and traditional, although even the Turkish Persianists of Sayatʿ-Nova's time had virtually abandoned it.⁸⁹ A complete example of the form has been quoted above.⁹⁰ An extended form replaces the quatrains by quintains (thus AAAAB, CCCCB, DDDDB, etc.), and this is frequently annotated in Georgian as *mukh(a)maz-i*, APT *mukhammas*, stanzas consisting of five verses.⁹¹ A poem consisting typically of five of these quintains is annotated by Ioane as *mksamazis khamisei*⁹², i.e. an APT *khamîs* 'group of five (stanzas)' of *mukhammas*, a Georgian example of which has been quoted above⁹³. In contemporary Ottoman poetry this form also tended to be eschewed, the example given by Gibb from Wâsif (d. 1824/5) being used, almost as a doggerel in the spirit of W.S. Gilbert, for a humorous purpose,⁹⁴ which is in no way the case with Sayatʿ-Nova's. The *murabbaʿ/mukhammas* structure is, accordingly perhaps, rare in the poet's Azeri verse, though, as we have seen,⁹⁵ the important autobiographical *Shukʿur olsun yaradana* consists of twelve stanzas of *murabbaʿ*, and the impressive 1758 elegiac *Olam ayagha baitʿursun* 'May Death's foot finish me off'⁹⁶ of five stanzas of the same form.

As one might expect, given the rhyming possibilities of Georgian mentioned above, the form is not uncommon in Sayatʿ-Nova's verse in that language. In his selection, Baramidze includes seven poems in *murabbaʿ*,⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Georgian annotation to *Indz u im sirekan*, loc. cit.

⁸⁹ Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, quotes no examples.

⁹⁰ Above, p. 263, n. 58.

⁹¹ E.g. T p. 78, I fol. 1A.

⁹² Ioane, fol. 57.

⁹³ Above, p. 265, n. 61.

⁹⁴ Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 289, vol. 6, no. 439, p. 323.

⁹⁵ Above, Chapter Two, pp. 57-59.

⁹⁶ T p. 38, annotated there as an *ilahi* or religious poem; Hasratʿyan, p. 185.

⁹⁷ *Galobs tʿutʿi, qazalakhi*, I fol. 7, B pp. 35-36; *Arvis uari ar utʿkʿvams*, B pp. 37-38; *Kokobi dzudzutʿ gazrdilo*, I fol. 12A-13, *Ra ikʿneba damidzakho*, I fol. 1, B pp. 43-46;

and three in *mukhammas*.⁹⁸ As in the case of the Armenian poems, these are of a high literary quality. The same melodic feature of Georgian leads the poet to exceed the *mukhammas* and produce occasional sextains, which are rare, though not unknown, in his Armenian verse.⁹⁹ Thus his *Ode to the River Kur* begins with a sextain in monorhyme:

*Mtkvaro amghvreulo, araziano.
me shen ver gagidzleb, mizeziano.
dibisa lobdano bazaziano,
sirma-abreshumo qazaziano,
t'valebi, tsarbebi, lamaziano,
me ra mabadia, ramiziano?*¹⁰⁰

'Turbulent Kur, rich in estates.¹⁰¹
I cannot withstand you, capricious being!
Rich in merchants of damasked brocade,
Weavers of gold-embroidered silks,
Your eyes, your eyebrows, beauteous one!
What have I produced, O enigmatic one?'¹⁰²

The subsequent four stanzas are quintains, the final verse of which rhymes with that of the first stanza:

Gana me mshieri viqav, Ioane, fol. 5, B pp. 51-52; *Ch'vensa vardsa daekhseni*, B pp. 67-68; *An - anust'ana naghveli*, I fol. 11, B pp. 73-74.

⁹⁸ *Baghi bulbulit' avsila*, I fol. 2; *Sop'elsa da sop'els shua*, I fol. 6; *Ra zarbabi, ra atlasi*, I fol. 3, B pp. 47-48.

⁹⁹ The Armenian poem *T'amam ashkhar pētut eka* is annotated in the *Tetrak*, p. 124, as being 'spoken like a *museddes*' (*musadasivit' itghvian*), which probably means that the third and fourth verses of the quatrains of which the poem is composed were repeated in performance (see below, n. 139). A true *museddes* is the Armenian poem *P'ahradēn mirats, Shirin asatz* 'Farhād being dead, Shirin said', Ioane, fol. 60A, Hasrat'yan, p. 65, truly composed of sextains, of which only four stanzas, the last lacking one verse, now exist (see below, *ibid*). The first sextain is in monorhyme, and the fifth and sixth verses are repeated as a refrain in the subsequent stanzas, which is the arrangement, for example, of a *museddes* by Sayat'-Nova's contemporary, the Ottoman poetess Fitnet Khanim (d. 1780), quoted by Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 158, vol. VI, p. 295.

¹⁰⁰ Baramidze, pp. 15-16. The poem is not found in Ioane's manuscript (nor, of course, in the *Tetrak*, which contains no Georgian verse other than the few hemistichs in the *Poem in Four Languages*). Doubts — and they can be no more than that — concerning its authenticity arising from the use of the rare dialectal ablative in *-dam* (below, n. 104), have been discussed above, Chapter Two, p. 55.

¹⁰¹ Reading *araz-ian-* as from APT *ârâzî* 'lands, estates' (S). Other possibilities are APT *'araz* i.a. 'wealth, property' as well as 'accident, disease, cause of misfortune, plunder' (Steingass's menu would have appealed to the punster in Sayat'-Nova), or APT *'arž* 'width, breadth' (S, R), Az. *ärz* 'extent' (*protyazhenie*, Äzizbäy). The word is not in my Georgian dictionaries, Ch'ik'obava, Tschenkeli, etc.

¹⁰² Reading *ramiziano* for B *ra miziano*, from Az. *rämz* 'symbol, hint, allegory', Äzizbäy (APT *ramz* 'hinting by moving the lips, knitting the brows, etc., double entendre, riddle, enigma, mysterious allusion', S).

*Zogi katz'i ghvinis smas ekhvetseba,
zogi mejlisis zmas ekhvetseba,
ch'emi ena gamot'k'mas ekhvetseba,
guli mas stiris, mas ekhvetseba.
daekhsen ch'ems vardsa, krazaniano!*

'One man in wine-bibbing takes refuge,
Another in the business of the assembly takes refuge,
My tongue in recitation takes refuge,
(My) heart weeps there, in it takes refuge.
Release my rose, O (river lined) with St. John's wort!'

*Shensa k'ebas satsereli zghva unda,
shens shemkhedavs t'avshi ragha chkva unda.
gana saqvareli skhvadaskhva unda?
sul k'veqanas sheni monakhva unda.¹⁰³
gamodi ghrublidam,¹⁰⁴ mzev naziano!*

'He who writes your praise needs a sea (of ink).
Your beholder, what (a cool) mind does he need in his head!
Does a lover need variety?
The world has only to look at you.
Come out of the clouds, O sun full of grace!'

*Modi, damijere, baghdadis tsero!
Indoet'is t'ut'isaebr imghero!
ra ik'neba ert'khel metz' damijero,
p'erhadis bebero, shirinis mtero,
she avo mijnuro, she braziano!*

'Come, listen to me, crane from Baghdad.
Like the parrot of India you squawk (*lit. sing*)¹⁰⁵
Perhaps you will listen to me, too,
Old man to Farhad, enemy of Shirin,
You evil lover, you enraged thing!¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ B reads *nakhva mounda*, which does not rhyme, and is easily amended.

¹⁰⁴ This dialectal ablative in (*i*)*dam* (< (*i*)*dan* < *it'gan*) and its possible implications are discussed above, n. 100, and in Chapter Two, p. 55.

¹⁰⁵ As in his Georgian poem *Galobs t'ut'i, qazalakhi* — *bulbulis bani mindoda* 'The parrot sings (squawks), and the magpie. I want the deep voice of the Nightingale' (I fol. 7, B pp. 35-36). Most likely meant as criticism of his rivals' voices compared with his own, this is not intended as flattery. His near contemporary Arab-Ottoman poet Fâzil (d. 1809/10) compares the speech of Greek women with the voice of the parrot (*nâtiqalî tûtî* 'talking parrot', Gibb, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 312), upon which Gibb comments, 'the "speaking parrot" we have often seen as a metaphor for a prattling beauty' (IV, p. 239, n. 2). Sayat'-Nova's dislike of the 'song' of parrots, magpies, and cranes, appears to have been stronger.

¹⁰⁶ The reference is to Khosrov (Chosroes), king of Persia, his Christian wife Shirin's far from complacent husband, who drove to his death her lover, the quarryman Ferhâd

*Va t'u ert'i rigi nardi gastsio.
mardi mohkla da namardi gastsio,
bulbuli atiro, vardi vastsio,
net'a romel ert'is dardi gastsio,
bech'av sayat'novav, t'avaziano!*

'Woe if you carry away a row of spikenard.
You have killed the quick, and carried off the unmanly.¹⁰⁷
You will cause the Nightingale to weep, (if) you carry off the Rose.
Blest be he who may carry off a man's love-pain,
O wretched Sayat'-Nova! O noble river!'

The poem, in which the sentiments are as turbulent and tortuous as the river itself, which in places is confused with the beloved (what river, in the wildest of metaphors, has eyes and eyebrows?), is not of only formal importance. Apart from the rhyme-scheme, however, it illustrates another main feature of Sayat'-Nova's versification in all three of his languages, the hendecasyllabic verse.

The eleven syllables of such a verse in Sayat'-Nova may usually be analysed as composed of six syllables followed by a caesura and five syllables, as in the above poem. There are irregularities in this respect, as in, for example, the second verse of the fifth stanza, *mardi mohkla da namardi gastsio*, which will not allow such division. This hendecasyllabic verse form of Sayat'-Nova may thus derive simply from the ancient Armenian syllabic tradition. His predecessor Naghash Hovnat'an, who employs a large variety of syllabic lengths in his verse, knows this form also, as in his love-song beginning

*Lusni něman paytsar eres bolorats
Es mėnatz'i karôt hamburitz' hamar.
Varserd oski t'eli něman olorats,
Es mėnatz'i karôt et taloy hamar.¹⁰⁸*

'O one with a bright face round as the moon,
I remained yearning for a kiss.

who, according to the legend, undertook for her sake to cut a way through the mountain of Bisitun, and on failing was persuaded to commit suicide by his own pick, so becoming a particular hero for up-hill battlers such as Sayat'-Nova conceived himself to be; one may compare that hero of American folklore, the steam-locomotive driver and stoker Henry).

¹⁰⁷ There is a pun here on G *mard* 'agile' and A *mard* 'man'; *namardi* can be only PT *nâpard* 'unmanly, cowardly, impotent' (the word is not in the usual Georgian dictionaries but is listed by Neiman as 'irresponsible, untrue, shameless').

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit. supra*, p. 14. A comparison of this with Sayat'-Nova's verse other than from a technical point of view would be invidious.

Your roses are as though encircled with golden thread,
I remained yearning to give (them) back (to you)'

It is, however, something more than a probability that Sayat'-Nova was strongly influenced by Turkish verse, where the hendecasyllabic form was so entrenched in popular literature that a European observer, travelling in Turkey in the 17th century, thought it obligatory.¹⁰⁹ An example from the Azeri tale of Ashigh Qarib 'The Wandering Minstrel', thus a theme dear to Sayat'-Nova's heart, begins:

*Könül talib olup uyma şeytana,
Fitne şemateti şer olacaqdır.
Bu dünya bir gağdır, bağbanı iblis,
Alması, héyvası, nar olacaqdır.*

*Alma haqqa nasdır, tamu şirindir,
Héyva rubadır, qandır, irindir.
Nar sağır malıdır, hedis derindir,
Denesi cesedde nar olacaqdır.¹¹⁰*

'Heart be a seeker (of Truth), do not listen to Satan.
The tumult of discord will be (ever) an evil.
The world is a garden, Iblis is its gardener.
Its apple, its quince, will be fire.

The apple is truly unlucky, (though) its taste is sweet.
The quince is usury, blood, and pus.
The pomegranate is deaf-man's property;¹¹¹ the tradition is deep.
Its seed in the body will be as fire.'

¹⁰⁹ *Musicam non norunt artificialem, sed fingunt carmina ad praescriptas regulas, quae ita se habent: quodlibet carmen undecim debet complecti syllabas* 'They know nothing of sophisticated music [!], but compose songs according to prescribed rules, which are thus: every verse must comprise eleven syllables'. The example he produces in an Italian transcription is interesting also for its typical sentiments: *Birechen bes on eiledum derdumi / Iarandan istemiscem iardumi / Terch eiledum zahmanumi gurdumi / Ne ileim ieniemezum glunglumi* 'My pain I have increased fivefold, yea, tenfold. From the Creator I have asked for help. I neglected my country, my city. What shall I do? I cannot prevail over my heart!' (Bartholomæus Georgievi(c)z Peregrinus, *De Turcarum moribus epitome*, printed after Augustus Gilsenius Busbequius, *De moribus Turcarum*, London, 1660, pp. 205-6).

¹¹⁰ Ehliman Ahundov, *Azerbaycan halk yazını örnekleri*, ed. Semih Tezcan, Türk Dil Kurumu yayınlari, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi: Ankara, 1978, pp. 326-7. Tezcan's New Turkish style orthography has been slightly amended above. There is in the poem a pun on *nar* 'pomegranate; fire'. *nas* can mean 'chewing tobacco' in Azeri (Äzizbây), but is interpreted above as APT *naḥs* 'oppressing, unlucky' although Tezcan's vocabulary lists this as *nes*. There are other possible double meanings, the Turks being as adept at these as Sayat'-Nova, whom they almost certainly influenced.

¹¹¹ This phrase, thinking of Armenian riddles which represent the pomegranate, otherwise a fruit symbolic of fertility, as a house of many mansions, I had interpreted as APTaz *mâl* 'property' of the APT *saghîr* 'small', clutching at the meaning of 'million'

Many other examples of this form may be found in the West Turkish *koşma* or popular ballad, such as the following of Öksüz Dede:

*Âciz kaldım dilberimin elinden
Benm kara bağrım her dem nâr eyler
Bülbülümden gonça gülden ayrıldım
Deli gönül dostu arar zâr eyler.
Ağlayup yürürüm bir dem gülmedim
Hakikatli doğru yârî bulmadım
Hey ağalar aslı nedir bilmedim
Dostum küsmüş rakipleri yâr eyler...¹¹²*

'I am left powerless at the hand of my beloved.
At every opportunity she sets my liver on fire.
From my nightingale, from the rosebud I have been separated.
My mad heart seeking the beloved makes lament.
Weeping I roam around. I have not smiled once.
I have not found a true and faithful beloved.
O masters, I have not found out the cause of it.
My friend sulks, and takes my rivals to be her lovers ...'

The sentiments of this latter poem will be familiar to all acquainted with the work of Sayat'-Nova, but our present interest is versification. The first stanzas of the above poems are not fully rhymed, and differ in their rhyme-scheme (xaya) from that of the following stanzas (bbba, etc.), their second and fourth rhymes (a) supplying those of the fourth verses of the subsequent stanzas. Such irregularity in the first stanza is common in Sayat'-Nova, e.g. in the Azeri poem beginning

*Deri(a)dan ch'êkhup'san khub inji, marjan,
g(i)met'u javahir, lal arasinda.
iar dilun shak'ardur, dēhanun shesha,
lablarun badamdur, bal arasinda.
Gal gozal, rahm eila, qanuma girma.
dishlarun inji t'ak' duzulmish shirma.
sach'larun sharbabi, zilp'larun sirma.
jamalun qamardur, khal arasinda.¹¹³*

listed by Redhouse for *mâl*. This is what too long a preoccupation with Sayat'-Nova's double-entendres can bring one to. Professor Geoffrey Lewis's straightforward reading as 'deaf-man's property' was puzzling until elucidation of the deep *ḥadīth* was provided by Francis Maddison, who found a recipe for a solution of dried ground pomegranate rinds recommended by the tenth-century Italian Jewish doctor Shabtai Donolo as a cure for a form of earache (A. Goor and M. Nurock, *The fruits of the Holy Land*, Israel Universities Press: Jerusalem, London, New York, 1968, p. 74).

¹¹² Ed. Köprülüzade, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹¹³ T p. 63; Araslı, p. 30.

'From the sea you have taken fine pearls and coral,
 Their worth among that of jewels and rubies.
 Beloved, your tongue is sugar, your mouth a cup,
 Your lips are almonds, coated with honey.

Come, beautiful one, have mercy, do not enter my blood.
 Your teeth are like pearls set in ivory.
 Your hair is satin, your locks are silk,
 Your beauty is (that of) the moon (with) a mole within it.'¹¹⁴

The irregular first stanza is found in Sayat'-Nova's Georgian verse, e.g. in the poem 'How may the heat of a star evaporate the sea', reproduced below in full by reason of its imagery, rhyming *xaya*, where *x* and *y* have no common harmony: *sitz'khe* (var. *skhivi*), *atisqos*, *kldesa*, *daitsqos*).¹¹⁵ The subsequent four stanzas rhyme normally, *bbba*, etc.

So also in his Armenian hendecasyllabic verse:

Shat mart' kosê, is yarimen hasrat' im.
Leili-Mejlumn êl ch'i êli ês halov.
Mart' piti hamasha beranët tëndghê,
*Khosk is asum arakavur masalov.*¹¹⁶

'Many men say, I yearn for a beloved.
 Will not Leila and Majnun have been in this state?
 People hang for ever on your lips,
 You speak in riddles and enigmas.'

In his Georgian annotation the poet terms this poem, as he does other such, a *varsaghi*, i.e. the Turkish *vârsâqî* 'special to the Varsaq tribe, name of a ballad-metre' (R).¹¹⁷ The general style, and the particular mention of Leila and Majnûn, clearly indicate a strong Muslim influence. Naghash Hovnat'an, though master of a wide variety of rhyme-schemes, does not employ this form.

The same irregular initial stanza is used by Sayat'-Nova in another common verse form, the octosyllabic, e.g.

¹¹⁴ This image is altered in Hasrat'yan's Armenian translation, p. 137, reading (in English) 'your figure is the sun within the moon', which makes no sense. In Russian, A. Tarkovski, *apud* Gaysaryan, p. 203, surrenders: (in English) 'But your mole (brings) sorrow to my heart, gracious one!'

¹¹⁵ Chapter Eight, pp. 302-304; I fol. 16A, B pp. 29-30.

¹¹⁶ T p. 114, H p. 32; I fol. 58A, with minor variants.

¹¹⁷ Hasrat'yan, 'Glossary', p. 314, giving no origin for this word, which is not in Persian, Armenian or Georgian dictionaries, explains it somewhat inadequately as 'a form of verse in which the rhyme of the rhyming line falls on the last word', presumably without compound rhyme (*radîf*). Shervinski, in his fine Russian version (*apud* Gaysaryan, p. 137) takes care to reproduce the irregularity of this first stanza (*tomlyus*', *veli, usta, tekli*).

Is k'u qimat'ën ch'im gidi.
javahir k'ari nēman is.
tesnoghin M(e)jlum ku shinis.
Leili didari nēman is.

Ashkharumēs imēn dun is.
bemurvat' is, murvat' ch'unis.
pēroshn(i)rēt nabat' unis.¹¹⁸
qand u shak'ari nēman is.

'I shall never know your (true) worth.
 You are like a gem-stone.
 You make him who sees you Majnun.
 You are like a vision of Leila.
 In this world you belong to me.
 You are merciless, you know no mercy.
 On your lips you have sugar. You are like sugar and candy.'

The form may be easily paralleled in Azeri, e.g. in the martial ballad that has nothing in common with any theme of Sayat'-Nova, beginning

Qezeblenme béle, paşa,
Misri qılınca qataram,
Atilaram şesper kimi,
Bağrın başına bataram...¹¹⁹

'Do not rave so, pasha!
 I vie with Egypt's sword.
 I leap like the six-sided mace.
 I penetrate to the liver's heart!'

And by the West Turkish more sophisticated verse of Öksüz Dede:

Gine evvelbahar oldu
Dalgalandı cuşum benim
Dağlar yeşil don giyince
Küheylandır eşim benim.
Bir yad ile konuşuncu
Zaman geçer alışınca
Nazlı yâre buluşunca
Durmaz akar yaşım benim.¹²⁰

'Spring has come again.
 My blood is in a turmoil.
 The mountains have put on green.
 My donkey is a pure Arab steed.

¹¹⁸ T p. 108, H p. 23.

¹¹⁹ Ahundov, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹²⁰ Köprülüzade, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

When speaking to a stranger
 The time passes smoothly.
 When I'm together with my coquettish love
 My tears unceasingly flow.'

The irregularity of these initial stanzas, a device of Turkish rather than Persian poetry in which initial verses tend to be more richly rhymed than those following, is deliberate, a sophisticated primitivism designed to echo the warming-up of the minstrel's instrument at the beginning of a performance, taking as it were the first halting steps of a bird on the ground, or a swan on the water, before launching off into the perfect flight represented by the succeeding, contrasted, fully rhymed stanzas.

Such hendecasyllabic poems with the irregular initial stanza Sayat'-Nova sometimes annotates as *qap'ia*, i.e. APT *qâfiya*^h, there a general, polysemous, term ('poem, rhyme, cadence, metre, the final consonant on which the rhyme of a poem rests', Steingass): as *Dun ên hurin es vur gemi ku zavt'ê* 'You are the houri that takes hold of my ship'.¹²¹ The identically structured above-mentioned poem *Is k'u qimat'ên ch'im gidi* he calls a *t'aslib-i*, i.e. APT *taşlib*, a cruciform or chiasitic arrangement of verses.

This, if anything referring to the subsequent repetition of the rhymes of the second and fourth verses strung throughout the rest of the poem, seems hardly appropriate. It would slightly better fit poems in which the final verse or couplet of the first stanza is repeated throughout the poem as a refrain, as in *Dastamazet sim u sharbab* 'Your coiffure is silver and silk', in which the couplet

*T'ak' is mîrnim, dun sagh êlis, eskhêt im girizman ê.
 Nazit mîrnim, naz mî ani, nazêt indz ku spanê*¹²²

'Let me die, as long as you are well. Your love is my grave.
 May I die for your charms, so not cast your spell, your charm is killing me'.

is so used. This poem is annotated as a *taslibi mukhalip'is hangshi khut'i iarp'aghli* 'a chiasitic poem in the *mukhallif* rhyme-scheme with five

¹²¹ T pp. 112-3, H p. 29. Hasrat'yan could cause confusion by representing the annotation as *ghap'ia-yarana*: the poem is annotated in the left margin of T p. 112, as *qap'ia*, and at the end on p. 113 as *iarana arut'inas nat'(k'omi)* 'said to the beloved by Arut'in'. Similarly, Hasrat'yan describes *Arantz' k'iz inch' konim* 'What shall I do without you?' as 'a good *yarana-ghap'ia*' (p. 33), whereas the note on p. 115 of T describes it as *iarana* 'to the beloved', and the note at the end *qap'ia kargi* 'a good *qâfiya*'. There is enough confusing terminology in the annotations without inventing new ones.

¹²² T p. 117, H pp. 34-35.

leaves', in which APT *mukhallif* ('who appoints another to be successor', Redhouse) refers to the refrain as something handed by the first stanza to the subsequent stanzas, and *iarp'agh* (Az *yarpaq* 'sheet of paper', 'list', Äzizbäy, T *yapraq*), possibly influenced by PT *barg* 'leaf of a plant', also 'melody, harmony, music' (Redhouse), is used as 'stanza' or 'verse'. Sayat'-Nova uses the term *t'aslib* more accurately in his description of the important *Is kanch'um im lalanin* as *rubai baiat'i t'aslibi*, i.e. 'quatrains (APT *rubâ'î*) (and) *taşlîb* verses (Az *bayatî*)¹²³ in which five hendecasyllabic quatrains intertwine with, are crossed by, five quintains composed of four verses of seven syllables and a final verse of fourteen syllables rhyming consistently among themselves *aaxaa*.¹²⁴

The term *barit'avuri* describing *Gëna, hidën khagh mi ani* 'Go, do not play a game with him' in the margin of the *Tetrak* and in a phrase introducing the poem (*angaj ara barit'avur* 'listen to this *barit'avur*'), a very complex poem composed of five groups of four mainly octosyllabic sextains each followed by a quatrain, is wholly explained by its etymology, AP *baħr-i ʔawîl* 'long verse', since, comprising 25 stanzas, 120 verses in all, it is the longest of the poet's recorded œuvre.¹²⁵ That the length of its verse is short, and APT *ʔawîl* technically means 'long-metred poetry' (Redhouse), including a particular type with verses of fourteen syllables, must be irrelevant here. Turkish influence is indicated by his mention in the annotation to the poem of an untraced 'Ashugh Oghlan' who might produce such a work or be subject to the sentiments in it,¹²⁶ and to whom

¹²³ Az *bayatî* 'melody, song; dirge', Äzizbäy; as a form of APT *beyt* i.a. 'verse' (pl. *'abyât*) this is irregular.

¹²⁴ T p. 139, H pp. 21-22; see above, Chapter Two, pp. 101-105.

¹²⁵ T pp. 104-106, H pp. 12-16. The sextains are composed of verses of 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 8 syllables rhyming with *radîf* aBCD aBCD aBCD aBCD eF eF aBCD, etc., the quatrains of 8, 8, 8, 11 syllables rhyming with *radîf* (first quatrain:) gHIJ, gHIJ, gHIJ, kLMNOPQ, subsequent quatrains linked by the rhyme of the fourth verse. A similar though less complicated poem alternating quintains of verses of 16 syllables with quatrains of verses of seven syllables is *Khoskirët malum im ari* 'I have understood your words', T pp. 108-110, H pp. 24-25; this is annotated as *mukhamazi baiat'it'*, 'quintains with *bayat'*, the heptasyllabic verse being common in Azeri poetry (e.g., among 68 quatrains of *maniler* (*bayatılar*) apud Ahundov, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-148, Äziziyäm, *çängälä*, / *Duman gälä*, *çän gälä*, / *Kätan köynäk*, *ağ mämä*, / *Al älinä cängälä* 'My Äzizi, castanets. Let the fog come, let the mist come. Linen blouse, white breast. Take the castagnettes in your hand', p. 148.

¹²⁶ T p. 106; *ese barit'avuri kargia rai rom ashugh oghlans da gadaghdeba sul amashi tsera* 'This *barit'avur* is good, something which might just (*da*) come over (?) Ashugh Oghlan. All this he wrote'. The verb *gadaghdeba*, carelessly written, probably

he attributes his qâfiya *Êshkên var kërak ê* 'Love is a burning fire'.¹²⁷ This personage, if he existed — his name, something like 'The Minstrel Boy', gives one pause — is clearly not the author of the two poems, the first mentioning the name of Sayat'-Nova three times, the second once, in the final stanza. He might have suggested the theme, and the form, to Sayat'-Nova, whose poems would then be in the Turkish tradition of the *takhmîs*, a variation on other admired poets' works.¹²⁸ It is possible that, despite the Azeri name, Ashugh Oghlan was an Armenian¹²⁹ performing in Azeri, like the Dosti (PT *dostî* 'Friendship, Love') to one of whose Azeri songs Sayat'-Nova recommends his *Is me gharib bêlbûli pês* 'I like a wandering Nightingale' and *Diba u engidunia* 'Brocade and New World cloth' be sung.¹³⁰

As mentioned above,¹³¹ Sayat'-Nova is indebted to his Armenian predecessor Naghash Hovnat'an for another verse form consisting of fifteen syllables divided into groups of five, e.g. *K'ani vur jan im, / yar, k'i qurban im, / aba inch' anim* 'As long as I have life, / beloved, I am a sacrifice unto you, / but what shall I do?', which is annotated as in the *hang* (here 'verse form') of the song (*khagh*) *T'asirên ch'ini* 'The China cups', the initial words of a refrain (see above, p. 225). A closely related form is the fourteen syllable verse, divided 5 - 4 - 5, of the Georgian poem *Gikhdeba zari, / ok'ros ghila, / t'ana shenia* 'Gold befits you, the golden buttons, which you wear'.¹³²

An outstanding feature of Sayat'-Nova's verse largely responsible, apart from the musicality of the individual words and combinations of

stands for **gada-khd-eba* (*gh* for medial *kh*) 'will pass over' (cf. *gardakhda khani* 'time went by', on *khdoma* (fut. pass. *khdeba*), Tsch, 2316b), 'will happen upon'; Hasrat'yan, p. 16, suggests '... which will pass through Ashugh Oghlan's head' (.. or *Ashugh-Ôghlani glkhovn antz'nelu ê*). The preverb *ga(r)da* is a powerful modifier ('over, down'), but the compound could perhaps mean merely 'suits, fits' (cf. the mukhammas *Gikhdeba zari* 'Gold suits you', B p. 33, below n. 132).

¹²⁷ T p. 113: *ese ashugh oghlanis ogut'lama. arut'inas nat'k'omi. kargi* 'this is an *öyüdlämä* (didactic poem) of Ashugh Oghlan'.

¹²⁸ E.g. 'the six takhmises on as many ghazels of the Pasha's several masters' by Sayat'-Nova's Ottoman contemporary, the Grand Vizier Mehmed Râghib Pasha ('Qoja Râghib') (1698/9-1763), Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 97.

¹²⁹ Suggested by Hasrat'yan, p. 236.

¹³⁰ T p. 107, H p. 18; see below, p. 286, n. 138, for the text of this annotation and its musical significance. Hasrat'yan, p. 236, identifies Dosti as an Armenian ashugh, now buried in the Khojivank' cemetery in Tiflis, known as the author of a Turkish song, though it is not clear whether he wrote any in Armenian.

¹³¹ P. 276. The poem is 'not now in the *Tetrak'* (H p. 243), and Ioane's varying annotation does not mention *T'asirn ch'ini*, but refers to an Azeri melody.

¹³² B p. 33; the poem is composed of five quintains.

words discussed above, for his popularity among his kinsmen, is his sense of rhythm. Armenian verse is syllabic. Of 'that purely syllabic system of scansion which the Turks call *parmak hisâbı* or 'finger-counting', Gibb says that it 'alone is really in harmony with the Turkish language where, properly speaking, there is neither quantity nor accentuation', and criticises Wâsif for not having 'the hardihood to go to the root of the matter and wholly ignore the Persian metres which are essentially alien to the genius of the Turkish language'. It might have been possible, given a tradition based upon that of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, for Armenian poets, like their Turkish counterparts, to have devised a quantitative system.¹³³ But the Armenian poetry that we know developed at a time when Greek verse had, apart from the productions of some Byzantine classicists, ceased to be quantitative, and the main poetic influence on Armenian was Syriac, e.g. the poems of Ephraim, whose metre is syllabic. A system based upon strictly measured stress that came to predominate in Germanic verse remained also foreign to Armenian, Georgian and Azeri poetry. But in spite of the Turkish term 'finger-counting', and the *t'ueleatz' erg* or 'song of numbers' of Movsês Khorenatz'i, poetry is not a form of arithmetic, and there is more to syllabic verse than a succession of carefully counted syllables: to produce a rhythm, some form of accentuation there must be. French is also a language described as one without quantity and accentuation, but an *alexandrin* is not a succession of evenly long and evenly stressed twelve syllables. The stresses are lighter than in English or German, but although there is no conscious effort on the part of the poet to form metrical feet like iambs, trochees, anapaests, etc., the same sense of rhythm that underlies these classical feet is ever present. *Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères* of Baudelaire may be scanned as composed of lightly stressed iambs, better as a verse with four main stresses, and the traditionally essential caesura after the sixth syllable is conditioned not only by a syllable count, but by accentuation. So is it with the verse of Sayat'-Nova. The third verse of the first stanza of *Ashkarumës akh ch'im k'ashi* has an iambic rhythm:

*Něstim / vēres / shěvak' / anis // zarbab / vēran / is indz / ama*¹³⁴

'Let me so sit that you might shade me. You are a silken tent for me.'

¹³³ The principles in accordance with which this might have developed are discussed in my article, largely ruined by negligent and cavalier editing, 'A metrical experiment', *Raft, a journal of Armenian poetry and criticism*, vol. 3, pp. 39-56, San Francisco, 1989.

¹³⁴ T p. 116, H p. 37.

In Arabic, Persian and Turkish verse, however, by which tradition the Iranophile Sayat'-Nova could not have failed to be influenced, an iamb does not constitute a full metrical foot, which requires at least four short syllables or their equivalent (◡ ◡ –, – –), usually six (◡ – ◡ –, – ◡ ◡ –, ◡ ◡ – –, – ◡ – ◡, ◡ – – ◡), sometimes five (– – ◡, ◡ – –), sometimes seven (◡ – – –, – ◡ – –), so that, although spondees are common, a foot will usually comprise from three or four syllables. Sayat'-Nova and his audience would, therefore, have been more likely to feel the above verse as comprising four feet, thus:

Něstim vĕres / shěvak' anis // zarbab vĕran / is indz ama

The rhythm of the first verse of the same stanza is more subtle:

*Ashkharumēs / akh ch'im k'ashi // k'ani vur jan / is indz ama*¹³⁵

With the reservation that one is dealing here with stressed and not quantitative verse, these notional feet (– ◡ – ◡, – ◡ ◡ –, ◡ – ◡ –, ◡ – ◡ –) are common in Persian and Turkish verse. Though many of Sayat'-Nova's verses may be so analysed, he is, of course, not bound by the rules of Persian poetry, only by a sense of rhythm. Thus in

*Dastamazēt / sim u zarbab // nam shagh ekats / řehan ê*¹³⁶

the third heavy foot – – ◡ –, though rhythmic, does not occur in regular Persian verse. Read in a normal fashion, the following verse would be likewise irregular from such a standpoint:

*T'arametz'av / karmir vartĕn // bagĕn bělbul / ch'ê gali*¹³⁷

Both ◡ ◡ ◡ – and – – – ◡, the first two feet, would be irregular. But as rhythms they are perfectly acceptable. Such a version raises another matter. Sayat'-Nova was a minstrel who sang his poems to his own musical accompaniment, and it is possible to fit the most unlikely texts (cf. the chanting of the English translation of the Psalter) into musical bars. Thus, to take the common Arabic, Persian and Turkish metre and rhythm, adopted by Kurt Weil for *Und der Haifisch* in Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*, i.e. *raml* (– ◡ – –), it would be possible to sing the last-mentioned verse with the stresses

Tarametz'av / karmir vartĕn // bagĕn bělbul / řehan ê

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ T p. 117, H p. 34.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, st. 3, v. 1.

It is doubtful, however, that Sayat^e-Nova's sense of poetic rhythm would permit what would be a distortion of the normal accentuation of Armenian. That the words came first is shown by the annotations which indicate that his songs were sung to (then) well-known melodies. A certain lack of concern is shown in his instruction that three at least of his songs, including *Diba u engidunia* 'Brocade and New-World Linen', should be sung to the same tune or in the same mode as the Azeri *Dasta be-Dasta* of Dosti.¹³⁸ These three songs are not dated, but of significance may be their late position in the *Tetrak*, since they closely precede seven major Odes ('*qazal*') dated 1758, and two major Odes of 1759, all annotated as to be sung to the tune or mode of *Diba u engidunia*, thus in the manner of the same Azeri *Dasta be-Dasta* of Dosti.¹³⁹ It

¹³⁸ Re *Diba u engidunia* and *Is im gharib bēlbul*, T p. 107: *es ori simghere ert's hangshi aris v(i)ntz' istsavlos dostias simgheris khmit' t'k'is t'u ar itz'ode ikit'khe t'u gozalar ighnaghina bagh dasta bedasta t'arpanur* 'These two songs are in one tune (or mode: *hang*). Whoever wishes to learn them, perform them with the tune (or mode: *khma* 'voice') of Dosti's song; if you do not know that, ask about *gozalar ighnaghina bakh dasta bedasta t'arpanur* [Azeri: 'Look at the concourse (read *Az yġhinjaq* 'sobranie, skhodka, skhod', Äzizbāy) of beauties: hand in hand they move (*Az tārpānmāk*)]'. *Askharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi*, called a *ghazal*, is also to be sung in the same way: *dasta bedast t'arp'anuris khmashi* 'in the voice of *dasta bedast(a) t'arpanur*, T p. 116; H p. 37).

¹³⁹ Of 1758: *Vuntz'or vur gharib bēlbul*, T p. 120, H p. 45; *Me khosk unim il't'imazov*, T p. 121, I fol. 67A, H p. 48; *Angin akēn vēret sharats*, T pp. 122-3, I fol. 65A, H p. 50; *T'amam ashkhar pētut ēka*, T p. 124, I fol. 66, H p. 51; *Yar k'iz iski zaval ch'ēli*, T p. 125, I fol. 65A, H p. 55; *Ėskhemet andanak ēla*, T p. 126, H p. 54; *Ėndur ach'kēs ch'ē tz'amakum*, T p. 128, H p. 49. Of 1759: *Indz u im sirekan*, T p. 127, p. 75; *Patkirk'ēt qalamov k'ashats*, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7. The Georgian annotation to *T'amam ashkhar*, which consists of five quatrains, is puzzling: *K' esetz' diba u ie(n)giduniis han(g)shi rom musadasivit' itghvian arut'(ini)s k'k. UMV* 'This also [like *Angin akēn*] (is) in the *Diba u iengidunia* tune [or mode: *hang*] which they say [for *itqvian*] like a *musaddas* [poem composed of sextains], by Arut'in, 446 of the chronicon'. This may mean that the quatrains were sung as sextains by the repetition of the third and fourth verses of each stanza. *P'ahradēn mīrats*, *Shirin asatz* 'Farhad being dead, Shirin said', I fol. 60A, H p. 65, truly composed of sextains (only four extant, the fourth lacking one verse), is annotated as in the mode or tune (*khma* 'voice') of *mustazat* (APT *mustazād* 'increased; an ode, etc., having a supplement to each distich or hemistich', Redhouse); as Hasrat'yan notes, *musaddas* 'poem in sextains' may be more exact. Ioane's annotation, fol. 62A, to the octosyllabic verses of *Kisamuraz mi spani*, viz. *ese diakh kai garaelis [gasaelis? gazelis?]* *khmazeda aris* 'This is very good, it is in the *garael(i)/gasael(i)/gazel(i)* mode (*khma*)' is puzzling; the doubtful word may be *Az gārīlā* 'spread out, stretched' ('*ras-topirennīf*', Äzizbāy), not an improbable term *a priori* for a style of musical performance (*allungato*, *largo*); Hasrat'yan, p. 62, though there is no *-h-* in the form, reads *garehli*, without explanation. Other doubtless once popular melodies referred to in the poet's musical instructions which the present writer has not been able to trace are *Shirvanis hangshi rom anobbs t'u uolarum(u)zdan* '(in) the Shirvan mode (*hang*) (in) which is performed (*lit. spoken*) *uolarum(u)zdan* [for *Az yollarumuzdan* 'from our roads, ways'] to which *Inch' konim hek'imēn* 'What shall I do with a doctor' of 1756 (T p. 132, H p. 40),

is to be regretted that none of the Azeri melodies or modes that Sayat'-Nova names have to the present writer's admittedly limited knowledge yet been traced,¹⁴⁰ though someone in the Caucasus or Azerbaidjan may still perhaps know them. The major Armenian odes of 1758 and 1759 are the poet's swan-songs. It seems that what he had to say in them was of such over-riding importance that the melodies had become virtually immaterial, and might as well be sung to somebody else's tune. As discussed above,¹⁴¹ this lack of musical inventiveness is unlikely to have passed unnoticed by his courtly audience, and may have contributed to the reasons for his dismissal.

It is impossible today to have a clear idea of how Sayat'-Nova sang his songs. The terms used in his annotations are vague. From the note to *Bēlbuli hid latz' is ēli*, that it is to be sung in a certain *hang* in the Ottoman *mugham*, where the latter can be only APT *muqām*¹⁴² 'mode', one might assume that *hang* here, describing the Azeri *Belir qap'i* means here 'tune' as distinct from 'mode' (we have seen above, p. 286, that the word seems also to have been used as 'verse form'). Today the song is sung in the Hidjâz *maqâm* (A B half flat C sharp D ...),¹⁴³ a distinctive scale that might loosely be considered the 'Ottoman' or 'Arab' mode *par excellence*. The meanings of Classical Armenian *yang* (< *i-ang*, > *hang*), basically 'falling in (with)', thus 'apt, fit; end, term, rhyme, cadence, numbers, harmony' (Bedrossian), serve only to underline its inexactitude. The Georgian term *khma* 'voice, sound, melody' (Tschenkeli) is used in the annotations as distinct from *simghera* 'song', and must also mean 'mode'.

the text of which in fact indicates a parting of ways, is to be sung; and *belir qap'is hang-shi t'aslibi osmalis mughams* 'taslīb in the tune (*hang*) of *belir qap'i* [? *Az bilir qap'ı* 'he knows the gate', or *bellār qap'ı* 'he digs the gate' (like Ferhād?)] in the Ottoman mode [APT *muqām*]' for the 1752 *Bēlbuli hid latz' is ēli* 'Like the nightingale you weep', T p. 119, H pp. 8-9; and the octosyllabic Armenian song, *Bēlbulēn nēstats ē vart'in, lav kanch'ēr na vart'i hama* 'The Nightingale sat by the Rose, Well sang he for the Rose', to which the two 1757 songs *Mejlumi pes* 'Like Majnun' (T p. 118, Ioane, fol. 70, H p. 41) and *Ėshkhemen ēnpes varvil im* 'I so burned for love' (T p. 118, H pp. 42-43) were to be sung (T p. 118).

¹⁴⁰ Sayat'-Nova's Western Armenian contemporary, the tambourist Küçük Arut'in of Constantinople, names 38 Turkish melodies in his *Manual on Oriental Music* (translated from the Armeno-Turkish without mentioning the original title as *Rukovodstvo po vostochnoi muzike* by N.K. T'ahmizyan, Erevan, 1968, pp. 139-140), none of the titles showing any relationship with those named by Sayat'-Nova. See above, p. 65.

¹⁴¹ Pp. 150, 229.

¹⁴² See n. 139 above.

¹⁴³ 'A Song by Sayat'-Nova [*Patkirk'ēt ghalamov k'ashats*]', *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 28-29.

The verse structure of all Sayat'-Nova's principal Odes is such that all may be fitted without difficulty, not only into one mode, but into one traditional tune, say, that to which Shara Talyan sings the 1758 Ode, *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a request to make', which the annotation indicates is to be sung to the *hang* of *Diba u iengidunya*. Whether this modern rendering is really in the tune or mode in which Sayat'-Nova sang it is, of course, open to doubt, the great variety of tunes in which modern musicologists and musicians present his songs suggesting that the tradition may be completely lost. There is some room for hope, however. Two hundred years would not be long for a tune to survive in Western Europe, as witness the English *Greensleeves*, published in 1580. It is true that European musical notation would preserve it, whereas in the Near East no such system existed until very recent times¹⁴⁴. On the other hand, Oriental oral traditions are strong: all the written and printed Qur'ans in the world could be destroyed overnight, but a multitude of *hâfîz*'s could write it down again. Musical forms were taught by a master (*pîr*) to an apprentice (*shâgird*), who in turn might become a *pîr* to pass them on to his apprentices, which is the way in which Sayat'-Nova, who acknowledges his debt to his *pîr*, learned his craft. A melody is safer, in fact, on the lips of the people, providing these do not perish, than in a foreign musical notation: despite his great services to Armenian folksongs as far as the texts are concerned, Komitas, forcing the tunes to fit the piano, a 'tempered' and therefore distorting instrument even within its own limitations (it knows only the half-tone interval, whereas the quarter tone is an essential in Eastern modes, including Armenian), contributed to the tradition's decline. Béla Bartok's transcriptions of Turkish folksongs¹⁴⁵ bear witness to a better ear. To what

¹⁴⁴ See Addenda, p. 454.

¹⁴⁵ *Turkish folk music from Asia Minor*, ed. B. Suchoff, Princeton, 1976. Work in this area could not fail to be of Armenian relevance. A love-song represented as sung by a Circassian maiden anxious to elope with the son of a Kurd, refers to a 'daughter of the Armenian' as the object of the singer's sympathy (p. 137/225). Kozan, i.e. Sis in Cilicia, is the scene of a Turkish attack and defeat (p. 132/220). *bodî*, recorded as 'duck' in the vilayet of Yozgat but which no-one could explain to Bartok (p. 156/244), is Arm. *bad* 'duck', though one might have expected a Western pronunciation *p'at'*; cf. with Arm. diminutive T *badik* 'celui qui a une petite taille, de courtes jambes, et une démarche dandinante' (M. Mikhaïlov, *Matériaux sur l'argot et les locutions populaires turc-ottomans*, Leipzig, 1930, p. 18). *öskün*, another word the meaning of which could not be established, is Arm. *oski* 'gold' (with def. art. *oski-n*, though *-ün* might be a Turkish genitive): *öskün devesi* 'camels of (the) gold', i.e. 'laden with the gold' (p. 132/220); *oski* is otherwise known in T slang for 'lira' ('quid') by analogy with T *altın* 'gold, gold coin', Mikhaïlov, p. 16). *çinçin*, term of endearment addressed to a child (p. 151/239) is W. Arm. dialect

extent Armenian secular music was modal in the 18th century is a matter for conjecture. In the ecclesiastical field, the Armenian Psalter is still today sung in Jerusalem in eight modes and sub-modes, but elsewhere that tradition is largely lost. A Western European can doubtless get a fair idea of how Sayat^ʿ-Nova sang his songs by listening to the *türkü* of present-day Turkish *aşık*'s who may be heard daily on e.g. the Avrasya channel of Türk Radyo Televizyon, Ankara.

The tune to which the baritone Shara Talyan sings *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a word to say',¹⁴⁶ omitting accidentals, is basically as follows:

Me khosk u- ni-i -i- i-i- -im il- t'i-i -ma- -zo-o- -o- o-o-o-o-

-ov an-gach a-a a-a a-a ra- -a ov a-a- -ach'-ki lus

ch'inch'in 'pure, clean' (Cl. and E. Arm. *jinj* (A. Suk'iasyan, *Hayotz' lezvi hamanişneri ba'aran*, Erevan, 1967), unless teasingly from *ch'ēnch'in* 'worthless' from *och'inch'* 'nothing'. Outside Armenian linguistics, *aksur*, not understood (p. 141/229), is probably a form of APT *qusâr* 'fault' ('if thou wouldst die, I would wash out my fault', paralleled by the *get* 'offence' which Sayat^ʿ-Nova feels he may have committed in *Me khosk unim*, st. 1 v. 3). The *gürbe* which the swashbuckling highwayman mouse brings laden on five hundred horses (p. 133/221) is possibly not metathesized *gübre* 'dung', however useful a fuel in Anatolia, but straightforwardly as T *gürbe* (P *gurbah*) 'cat', imagined hyperbolically as his victim. Thematically, a lover's praise of his mistress's eyes as worth Smyrna, Konya, Kars, Ahişka, Erzerum, Van, Balk, Bukhara, Yemen, Baghdad, Persia, Shiraz, Georgia, Egypt, Hidjaz, India, Hindustan, Istanbul, the universe (p. 140/228) numerically far surpasses the places equated by Sayat^ʿ-Nova with his mistress's moles (T p. 50, H p. 138, below p. 324). The things captivated by Sayat^ʿ-Nova's mistress's eighteen moles are not, however, restricted to towns, but include land and sea, the stars in the sky, the forbidden and the permitted, friend and foe, many jewels, mickle and muckle, and, of course, the ashughs and Sayat^ʿ-Nova himself.

¹⁴⁶ Recorded on *Vogue-Contrepoint* EXTP 1.018. This varies only slightly from the version sung by Vahan Ter-Arak'elyan as arranged for the piano, with non-Oriental counterpoint, by H. Shems, *Matyan imastut'yan geghetz'kut'yan ev anmatuytz' siroy*, A. Step'anyan: Alexandria, 1944, pp. 5-7. The words and music of thirty of Sayat^ʿ-Nova's songs, with two versions of *Me khosk unim*, are contained in M. Aghayan and Shara Talyan (ed. and arr.), *Sayat^ʿ-Nova*, Haypethrat: Erevan, 1963. Six songs (*K'ani vur*

A possible decline in Sayat^c-Nova's musical inventiveness in his last years has been mooted above. It is therefore not irrelevant that all the other 1758 and 1759 Odes may be fitted into this, undoubtedly impressive, melody, perhaps as follows:

*Vuntz^c-or /vu-u-u-u- / -ur / gha-ri-ib běl- / -bu-u-u- /lěn me ta- / ro-ov
ba-a-ghin / ka-a-ro-o- / -tê*

*En-du- / -u-u-u-u- / -ur / ach^c-kě-ěs ch^ca-ma- / -k^cu-u-u- / -um / sěr-tis /
me-e-ch^cě-ě- / -ěn / a-a-rin mē- / -natz^c.*

*An-gin / a-a-a-a- / -kěn / vė-re-et sha-a- / -ra-a-a-a- / -rats / an-ban / o-
o-o-os- / -ku / řa-akh- t-is go- / -zal*

*T^ca-mam ash- / -kha-a-a- / -arh / pě-tut ê- / -ka-a-a-a- / -a / ch^cě t^co- / -ghi-
i Ha-a- / -bash / na-a-za-a- / -ni.*

*Êsh-khe- / -me-e-e-e- / -et / an-da-nak ê-ê- / -la-a-a-a- / -a / êk mor- / -
t^ce-e-e-e- / -e / jal-la-t^cěn du- / -nis.*

*Yar k^ciz is- / -ki-i-i- / -i / za-va-al ch^cě-ě- / -li-i-i-i- / -l / k^cu dush- / -mē-ě-
ni-i- / -in / sha-ař ba-ch^ca- / -rats.*

*Indz u im / si-re-ka-a-a- / -an / ya-ri-i-i-i- / -i-i-i-i- / -in / me ta- / -ri-i-i-i- /
-in be- / -ra-ats^c gi-te- / -nak^c.*

*Pat-kir-k^cět / gha-a-a-la-a- / -mov / k^ca-a-a-sha-a-a-a- / -ats / t^cahrět / řa-
an-ge-e- / e / řa-an-gis a- / -num.*

The Muses are not prodigal in their gift to Mankind. No-one is perfect. Composers like Mozart, Liszt, Chopin were notable solo instrumentalists as well, but when it came to words, they had to rely upon others, or express their emotions, like Mendelssohn, in *Songs without Words*. Sayat^c-Nova was an outstanding composer of songs, but, as we have seen, when it came to the tunes to which they were to be sung, he relied upon others. There is no reason to assume that he was more than

jan im, Ch^cis asum t^ce latz^c is êli, Usti gu k^cas gharib bělbul, Bělbuli hid latz^c is êli, Ashkharhuměs akh ch^cim k^cashī are included in N. T'ahmizyan (ed. and arr.), *Oskep^corik — hay ergi goharnar* [Thesaurus — jewels of Armenian song], Sovetakan grogh: Erevan, 1982. Soviet gramophone recordings include *K^camanch^ca*, *Bělbuli hid*, *Is k^cu ghimet^cěn ch^cim gidi*, *Usti gu k^cas*, sung by Vagharshak Sahakyan on *Melodiya* Gost 5289-61 33D-12253 side 1, and *Patkirk^cět ghalamov k^cashats*, *P^cahradi meřats*, *Me khosk unim*, *Mejlumi pes korav yarěs*, same singer, side 2. *Eshkhemet* is performed on the t^car by Soghomon Seyranyan, and *Me khosk unim* as a duduk duet by Jivan Gasparyan and Rachik Gyurjyan on *Melodiya* Gost 5289-61 33D-00012252 side 2; *Eshkhemet* is played on the k^camanch^ca by G. Muradyan on *Melodiya* Gost 5289-68 33D-00013224 side 2. These recordings formed part of the rich collection of the late Edward Gulbekyan, to whom I owe this discography. A prose work on a minstrel can give only a very partial idea of his work, and a greater appreciation may be achieved by studying such recordings: the songs may not be as Sayat^c-Nova sang them two and a half centuries ago, but they give a better idea than performance on an English piano.

adequate as an instrumentalist, or likely to rank as soloist: the career of Dowland, as we have mentioned above, is an example of how exacting courts may be in this respect. Sayat⁵-Nova claimed mastery, by his thirtieth year, of three musical instruments, the *k'amanch'a* or spiked fiddle, the *ch'onguri*, and the [*t'*]amburê.¹⁴⁷ By this last it is almost certainly not to the classical Turkish instrument, the *tanbûr*, that he refers. This is a long-necked lute with a large wooden body some fifteen inches across, its sounding board gracefully shaped like a rose petal or an apple vertically dissected, of deep, cello-like sonority. Its neck is about four feet in length, which makes it too unwieldy to serve as a solo singer's own accompanying instrument, and I have nowhere seen it so used, any more than other principal classical instruments such as the *ûd* and dulcimer (*santûr*, *qanûn*) would be, instruments which require the player's undivided attention. The term *tamburu* is attested in Eastern Anatolia (Van, etc.), like the Caucasus under Iranian musical influence, for the smaller and more manageable *t'ar*,¹⁴⁸ a lute with a double-chested, figure-eight

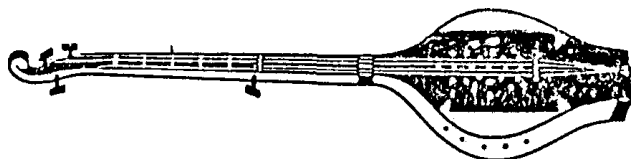
¹⁴⁷ *Astudzis m(a)ghdsu vurt'i arut'ins pstutz' inch'or iarsun tarin glukh dri amenan khaghin ama surb karapiti karoghut'en sovretz'a k'amanch'en u ch'ongurn u [t']amburen* '(In the name of) God, (I) Arut'in, son of a pilgrim, from-the-time-I-was-little until my thirtieth year gave myself to all manner-of-play, but by the power of the Holy Precursor I learned the *k'amanch'e* and the *ch'ongur* and the [*t'*]ambure', Armenian annotation in Georgian script to *Shat sirun is*, Tetrak, p. 102. It is strange that the poet should, apparently carelessly, omit the initial *t'*, but one has little compunction in restoring it — although Archag Tchobanian, in his interesting introduction to his elegant French translations of four of Sayat⁵-Nova's Armenian songs (he counts the Georgian poems as lost) lets the form stand as *ambouré*, as one of 'les principaux instruments employés par les achoughes du Caucase et de toute l'Asie antérieure' (*Les trouvères arméniens*, Paris, 1906, p. 251); but it is nowhere else so attested, cannot be phonetically explained, and the instrument is nowhere else mentioned by Sayat⁵-Nova. See Addenda, p. 454.

¹⁴⁸ L. Picken, *Folk instruments of Turkey*, London, 1975, p. 275. The *tambur* of Baghdad and Khorassan is synonymous with the Persian *sehtâr* ('three-string'), a solo instrument and not often used to accompany a singer (E. Zonis, *Classical Persian music, an introduction*, Harvard UP: Cambridge Ma, 1973, pp. 160-2). Zonis dates the *târ* as evolving at the earliest 'sometime during the 17th and 18th centuries from other Iranian instruments', or possibly coming 'directly from the Caucasus where a similar instrument [Sayat⁵-Nova's *tanbur*?] may be found today (pp. 156-9). This late entry into Iran, not long if at all prior to Sayat⁵-Nova's time, must explain why he did not use the term by which the Persians came to call the instrument, surely on P *târ* 'wire, string, thread', though this could be a rationalisation of the name of a different instrument, the *ṭar* of Morocco and Algeria, 'a drum', if again this is not affected by Ar. *ṭarqʿn* 'beating'. The two sheep's-bladder drum-like chests of the Persian and Caucasian instrument give it a certain ambiguity. The confusion in terminology goes deep: *pandura*, *tanbur*, *dombra*, Arm *bambu'n* (affected by *bamb* (P bam) 'bass string'), all cognate, are stringed instruments; the *tambourine*, *tabor*, P *tombak*, are *timpani* (Gk *túmpanon*). What these instruments all have in common is that they are *struck* (cf. Ar *ḍaraba*, P *zadan*, Arm *harkanem*,

shaped body, a classical instrument which is still the most common instrument accompanying the folk-singer in Armenia; its responsive thin sheep's bladder sounding surface is capable of producing sounds expressive of a wide variety of emotions, but in particular the melancholy tone of most of Sayat'-Nova's songs, and it is virtually certain that this is the instrument to which he referred. The Georgian *ch'onguri* is a slightly smaller lute with a neck about two and a half feet long, with a tulip-shaped body sounded by three long strings and a half-length *zil* or soprano string attached to a peg halfway down the neck. Its graceful shape is not matched by its tone, which, as one would expect from the thick wooden sounding board, the tiny holes in which do little to refine or augment the frequencies of the strings, is muffled and muddy. Some authorities describe it as an accompanist's instrument played mainly by women.¹⁴⁹ One can imagine that Sayat'-Nova used it principally to accompany his Georgian songs, which, with the exception of *plaintes* like *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, tend to be more conventional, altogether of lighter weight than his Armenian and Azeri compositions. His Georgian love-song *Khar t'urp'a sakravi, sazebiano* 'You are a beautiful musical instrument, O one accompanied by (many) instruments', does

'strike, play an instrument') with fingers or plectrum or stick and connected with Gk *τύπτω* 'strike', Skr *tu(m)pati* 'wound', Lat *stupeo*, Russ *topot* 'stamping'. Fisk (*Gr. etym. Wb.*, II, pp. 943-6) imagines a Greek borrowing from Hebr *tôp* 'timbrel', but all these terms are onomatopoeic, illustrating what Sachs saw in drum-names [not only those, CD], 'an endless spread and vitality of the stem TAB' (*Handbuch der Musikinstrumentenkunde*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1930, p. 106; for those who indulge in prelapsarian linguistics à la Marr *TAP* would be preferable, cf. Eng. *tap*, "taps", Arm. Georg. *dap**, P *daf*, Ar *daff*, *duff* (cf. *daffa* 'beat') 'drum', an instrument of great antiquity, since *homo sapiens*, like other animals, could probably dance before he could sing or instrumentalise. In Armenia today, the *t'ar* enjoys (?) the popularity of the cittern in Shakespeare's day and the guitar in this. This is largely due to the comparative ease, thanks to the tuning in harmony of the open three courses of strings, whereby simple tunes and accompaniments may be produced on it. A skilled player of this classical instrument, however, must master the many different modes to which the moveable gut frets may be adjusted.

¹⁴⁹ Alexander Buchner, *Colour encyclopedia of musical instruments*. London, 1980, p. 213, with a line drawing:



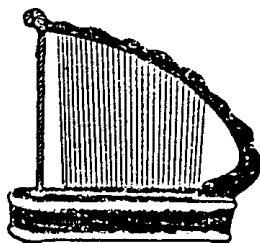
A plate in Fitzroy Maclean, *To Caucasia, the end of all the earth*, London, 1976, depicts two Georgian girls playing the instrument.

not in fact compare the beloved with the *ch'onguri* or the *ch'angi* 'harp' as suggested by Hasrat'yan's musicological Modern Armenian translation (*Sirun ch'ongur-ch'ang is, lar is sazanavur* 'For Love you are *ch'ongur*-(an)-*ch'ang*, you are the string on an instrument',¹⁵⁰ but the *ch'onguri* is in fact more female in shape (and use) than the other two instruments the poet played, and is probably the *sakravi* that he had in mind for the Georgian maid.

The fact that Sayat'-Nova claimed expertise on all three instruments is significant, but as far as his musicianship is concerned, not positively. They are all instruments upon which notes are produced by the stopping of strings at various intervals with the fingers, so that a player on one could, if circumstances so dictated, produce a tune on the others. But the required intervals on the individual string, and the intervals between one string and another, vary between the different instruments, not to speak of the different techniques involving bowing in the case of the *kamanja*, and the use of a plectrum or the fingers in the case of the *tanbur* and *ch'onguri*. A soloist would have to devote himself to one instrument to have the time (*ars longa vita brevis*) to achieve true mastery. In European terms, a player is either a violinist or a cellist, never, at soloist level, both, and Mr. Pinchas Zukerman's expertise on both the violin and the viola is the exception that proves the rule.

That Sayat'-Nova loved what must have been his favourite instrument, the *kamanja*,¹⁵¹ and appreciated its possibilities, there is no doubt.

¹⁵⁰ H p. 106; the translation is doubtless inspired by the Armenian *Inch' konis sant'ur k'amanch'en, zugsët ch'ongur ch'ang is anum* 'What have you to do with dulcimers and violins, you turn your golden-ornaments into *ch'onguris* and harps', *Patkirk'ët*, st. 3, v. 4, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7. Buchner, *loc. cit.*, says that the *ch'angi*, with strings of twisted horsehair, is also played mainly by women, and includes a drawing of the instrument, p. 212:



¹⁵¹ The term, a diminutive of Persian *kamân* 'bow', is explained by some as referring to the bow by which the instrument is played; but there exist in primitive societies instruments composed of one string attached to each end of a bent branch, thus in origin an

The major Ode he addressed to it, *Amen sazi mech'ën govats* 'Praised among all instruments', thus looking upon it, like Western musicians, as 'the King of Instruments', was composed in 1759, the year in which, despite himself, he took leave of the world of music. The instrument he described is constructed of gold, silver, diamonds, rubies, mother-of-pearl, with bow to match, which may owe something to hyperbole, though richly decorated and inlaid instruments may be found in Persian miniatures of the time. If the poet is describing, rather than imagining, such a valuable instrument, it will not have been his private property, since he was clearly no millionaire, but the property of the court which he would have to have left behind on quitting its employ. Nor may he have handled 'the beautiful instrument of Europe' which they, members of the Georgian court looking more to Europe, via Russia, than to the Orient, 'turned up' upon his dismissal, and by a player of which, as suggested in the commentary to *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* 'O my unhappy head!' above,¹⁵² he was replaced. His instrument he described now as his wooden fiddle (*ch'emi chianuri khisagan aris* 'my fiddle is of wood',¹⁵³ a word with pejorative overtones, as witness the Georgian usages *chianureba* 'draw out, drag on' ('in die Länge ziehen, hinziehen'), *chianurs mort'avs* "begins to play the *chianuri*", i.e. 'bricht in einen Wortschall aus' ('becomes voluble'; perhaps 'to harp on something?'), Tsch. His beloved *k'amanch'a*, on which he pinned such hopes in the not much earlier poem of 1759, has, with himself, come down in the world. But in his exile, and during his monkhood at Haghpāt, it may have — and did, if one can believe Khelashvili — afforded him some comfort.

actual weapon. The instrument is probably attested as early as the tenth century A.D., when it is reported that the Copts in Egypt showed greater expertise than the Indians. Nizāmī of Ganja (12th c.) mentions it, and it is represented, with a bow, in a 13th century Byzantine psalter (Werner Bachmann, *The origins of bowing and the development of bowed instruments up to the thirteenth century*, OUP, London, 1969, pp. 31-33, tr. by N. Deane from the original *Die Anfänge des Streichinstrumentenspiels*, Leipzig, (1964), 2nd ed. 1966); Zonis. *op. cit.*, pp. 169-172, with description and illustrations.

¹⁵² See above, Chapter Four, p. 124 n. 23.

¹⁵³ St. 3 v. 2, st. 5 v. 5, B p. 77. St. 5 there consists of seven rather than the required six verses, which renders one or another suspect, though not v. 5, which comprises the repeat rhyme (*radîf*).

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEJNÎS: ALLEGORY, PUNS, RIDDLES

Alphabetical cryptology, the dissolving of things into the component parts, or in languages where the short vowels are not written, their consonantal skeleton, concealing their reality for others to seek out, is an ancient practice. The Anglo-Saxon poets in the tenth-century *Exeter Book* concealed the answers to their riddles behind runes.¹ The reality behind the form of the words was stressed by the thirteenth-century Persian mystic Jelâluddîn Rûmî, who asked

‘Did you ever see a name without a corresponding reality,
Or never pluck a rose (*gul*) from the letters *G* and *L*?’²

Peasant philosophers aware of the proverb ‘There is the name but the thing itself does not exist’ (*anunĕ ka, ink’ĕ ch’ĕka* — the rhyme of the Turkish equivalent *ismi var, cismi yok*, pointed out to me by Professor Geoffrey Lewis, suggests Turkish priority in the formation of this striking example of popular wisdom), probably with concept such as ‘liberty’ and ‘justice’ in their mind at a time when these did not inform the deeds of their rulers, would have had to answer the first question in the affirmative. The second question would have been answered just as affirmatively by Sayat’-Nova, whose propensity for wordplay drove him to participate enthusiastically in the literary device of hiding things behind the veil of the letters composing their names. This was not merely a sport. Rûmî used the practice to encourage men to see through names to their reality:

‘You have read the name. Go and seek that which is named.
Recognise the Moon in the skies, not (its reflection) in the water of the river.

¹ Made more obscure by being partial (‘I saw W and I [Wlĕg “a horse”] going over the plain, carrying B E [BEorn “a man”]...’). or reversed (‘I saw S R O H [HORS “a horse”]...’), riddles 64, 19. The use of a group of runes (S R EA W D) to signify a (now unidentifiable) personal name in *The Lover’s Message* is particularly relevant to Sayat’-Nova’s cryptographical methods (W.S. Mackie, ed. and tr., *The Exeter Book*, part II, EETZ: OUP (1934) 1958, pp. 204, 108, 196).

² *Hich nâme bî haqîqat dîda-î / Ya za Gâf va Lâm Gul chîda-î.*

If you will rise above names and letters,
Clean yourself of self even at a stroke.³

Sayat⁵-Nova also used the device with serious intent, both with respect to the secular and the spiritual, for his puzzles concern his relations to his earthly beloved, and to God.

In the poem 'I call *Lanalin*' exhaustively analysed above by virtue of its importance for the poet's biography, the key-word *Lanalin* is as an isolated form meaningless, a made-up nonce word which Sayat⁵-Nova "analyses" back into more meaningful elements responsible in the first place for its formation, together with a like treatment for other rhyming nonce-words. In other examples of this genre of allegorical puns, the poet begins with words that are in themselves more immediately meaningful, which he then splits into various combinations of syllables in order to convey a series of alternative meanings. An Armenian *t'ejnis* reproduced by Ioane, fol. 59A, badly transcribed by Hasrat⁵yan (without specifying the folio number) p. 68 (Arm. no. 51), is as follows (the *ě*'s being supplied to conserve the hendecasyllabic metre where possible):

*Aib[ub]imě⁴ kart'atz'il im dasēdas.
hasa rae, hasa je, hasase.⁵
angartsaki min dzin ekav dasēdas.
angach⁶ kala, ch'imatz'a inch⁶ hasase.*

*Hazar tarin⁶ mart'i ach'kin t'ak'(a)vur.
k'ani tēna(n)g, k'ani (h)arust, t'ak'a(v)ur
ch'i hartz'ēni akhkat⁶, (h)arust, t'ak'av(u)r.
mahēn vur ka, ařantz⁶ kashařk⁶ hasase.*

*Darnetz'av, t'it'v(e)tz'av⁷ kink'ēs tsovatz'av.
akh k'ashelen sirtēs (ě)ngav tsovatz'av.*

³ *Ism kh "andī, rau musamma⁵-râ bijû. / Mah ba bâlâ dân, na andar âb-i jû. / Gar za nâm va ħarf kh"âhî bug'zârî. / Pâk kun khud-râ za khud, hân yaksarî.* A pun descriptive of this literary device might be *musamma mu'ammas* 'that which named is concealed'.

⁴ *aibubin-ěn* (for standard *aibuben-ěn*) would be better. It is strange that such an important word in the context should have suffered from Ioane's haplology. There is no justification for Hasrat⁵yan's *abēbiměn*.

⁵ This verse lacks one syllable. *rae* is the Georgian name for the character Թ *r*, which may represent Arm. ր *r* and ռ *ř*. If the Georgian name *jani* for յ *j* were given to Arm. ջ *j*, the verse would have the required number of syllables. However one reads them, *r/ř, j*, and *s* (of *hasa-sē*) are not in Arm. alphabetic order. There is no justification for Hasrat⁵yan's amendment to *hasa řa ē, hasa ch'a tsa, hasa sē*, upon which he builds an impossible chronological argument (see the translation below).

⁶ Text *tarni*, reliably amended to *tarin* by H.

⁷ So text; better amended to *t'ēt'vetz'av*, as H.

kat'elov kat'elov dardēs tsovatš'av.
me mart' chēka vur indz khērat hasase.

Hazar tar(i)n mart'u ach'kin k'arasun.
ov ē mnatz'i ashkharumēn k'arasun.
Sayat'nova, tarit' ēlav k'arasun.
dun mahi hid, mah k'izani it'⁸ hasase.

Ioane annotates this as *K' ese somkhuri t'ejnisia* '(In the name of) Ch(rist), this is an Armenian *t'ejnis*.' Although he so designates five Georgian and 11 Azeri⁹ as such, often using the phrase 'in the voice (*khma*) of *t'ejnis*', of which few are of this calembouristic nature, this present example is the only Armenian one he gives, the important 'I cry *Lanalin*' being absent from his collection.

This *t'ejnis* is not easy to interpret. A tentative translation would be:

'I have read the ABC in the order (of the letters). [*das* 'order']
 I reached R, I reached J, I reached S (*hasa-Sē*).
 Suddenly a voice came (like?) a lesson from a lesson. [*das* 'lesson']
 I listened, (but) did not understand what *hasas* is (*hasas ē*).

A thousand years in the eye of Man is (as) of a single day (in the eye of God) (*t'ak' avur*).

How many poor, how many rich, (or) king (*t'ak' avur*)¹⁰

Will not ask (why he is?) poor, (or) rich, or king.⁷

When Death stands (there), he is an unbribable porter (*hasas ē*)¹¹

My life has grown bitter and sour, has become a sea [of sorrows]¹²

From sighing 'Alas!' my heart has fallen into the ocean, ah! the pain!
 (*tsov, a, tz'av*).

⁸ The text, giving a verse of 12 syllables, is also otherwise corrupt: perhaps **mahē k'iznēd* is meant. Hasrat'yan proposes an emendation to *mahē k'iz hid*, which is metrical and grammatical.

⁹ Georgian: foll. 13, 15, 15A, 16, 16A; Azeri: foll. 23, 25, 26, 26A, 27, 27A, 28A, 29, 31A, 37A.

¹⁰ Reading *t'ak' avur* straightforwardly as the Tiflis equivalent of standard *t'agawor* 'king'. The word is borrowed in PT as *takfūr*, *tekfūr*, but in the like meaning of 'emperor, prince or lord of the Eastern Roman Empire' (as well as a bird and a fish name here irrelevant), R.

¹¹ Arm. *hasas* 'doorman, porter, nightwatchman, guard' (Malkhasyantz', who derives it from 'Turkish *hasas*' [? APT *hassās* 'possessed of the faculty of perception, sensitive', R].

¹² Hasrat'yan suggests interpreting *tsovatš'av* as though it were *zovatš'av* 'has grown cool'. An interpretation as *sovatš'av* 'grew famished, was starved' would be phonetically closer as with an initial unvoiced sibilant for an unvoiced affricate, but it is doubtful whether such procedures are allowed. It is possible that *kink'*, above interpreted as a dialectal form of Cl. *keank'* 'life', stands for *kimk'* 'palate' (*kink'* 'sole of foot' it cannot be); then Georgian *tsov(n)a* 'suck' could be implied: 'my palate ... has been sucked (dry)'.

Drip by drip my agony has become an ocean.

There is no man who gives (*lit. says to*) me mature advice (*has asê*)¹³

A thousand years in the eyes of a man is (really) a small affair (*k'ar a sun*)¹⁴

Who has remained in the world [built on] four columns? (*k'arasiwn*)¹⁵

Sayat'-Nova, your years have amounted to forty (*k'arasun*).¹⁶

You are in the company of Death, Death speaks with you, (saying),
'Come!' (*has asê*).'

The technique is clear: the recurring rhyme (*hasasê*), and the others in each stanza (st. 1, vv. 2, 4; sts. 2-4, vv. 1-3) are respectively homophones of different meaning. If the hearer does not perceive these puns, then he has failed. It is hardly to be assumed that the poet has failed, though it is now often not easy to comprehend the poet's intent. The *t'ak'avur* of vv. 2 and 3 of st. 2 of the above poem are particularly difficult, since it seems that in both cases the straightforward meaning of 'king' will fit the context. From what we know of the poet's skill as a punster, however, this is more than unlikely. Hasrat'yan analyses the rhyme of v. 2 as *t'a ga vur*, any meaning of which eludes me. Perhaps *t'ak'av ur* 'he has hidden where?' might fit: 'How many poor, how many rich — where has he (the rich man) hidden himself?' Another phonetic possibility would be *t'a k'avur* 'like (P *tây*) a godfather (Arm. coll. *k'awor* for *knk'awor*, Malkhasyantz', who lists also the cant meaning 'Syrian (*asori*)'. Another, *t'a K'avur* 'like Kâfûr (lit. 'camphor', also 'the name of a tyrannical king put to death by Rustam; nickname given in derision to a black slave', S). But just to write them underlines their improbability, and any topical validity they may just have had in Tiflis

¹³ Reading *has* as *hasu* (both forms in Malkhasyantz'). The order *khra* *has(u)* is Classical rather than Modern, but will pass. Hasrat'yan ignores the initial *h*- and suggests *as asê*, perhaps intending 'says this (advice)', which will not fit the context.

¹⁴ P *kâr* 'deed, affair', *a* 'is' (dialectal), *sun* 'small, little' (dialectal, Malkhasyantz').

¹⁵ Or '(he is) a speaking wind (G *k'ar*; cf. *k'ariani enis katz'i* 'a man with a loose tongue', Tsch); cf. Omar Khayyâm *chûn âb dar.âmadîm u chûn bâd shudîm* 'like water we came in and like wind we went out' (cit. A.J. Arberry, *The romance of the Rubaiyat*, London, 1959, p. 209). An alternative or additional interpretation might be '(the world built) of stone columns (Arm *k'ar, syun*)'.

¹⁶ By arbitrarily amending st. 1 v. 2 as noted above n. 2, Hasrat'yan, pp. 68, 249, contrives to read it as 'I have reached R (1000), I have reached Ch' Ts (700, 50), I have reached S (2000)', which amounts to 3,750. By interpreting S (*Sê*) somehow as 7 (*Ê*), he acquires 1757, which he takes to be the date A.D. of the poem, thus making the 40 year old poet (st. 4, v. 3) born in 1717. Apart from the fact that Sayat'-Nova dates his poems by the chronicon, and never by Anno Domini, this is manifest nonsense which cannot affect any discussion of the date of the poet's birth, and is thus worth nothing more than a footnote, and then only by virtue of Hasrat'yan's otherwise outstanding service to the study of Sayat'-Nova.

200 years ago is, like many allusions in ancient Greek and Roman comedians, now lost in the mists of time.

Apart from the two Armenian examples, there is one Azeri poem comprising the same complicated and extended form of *tejnîs*, but one, carefully avoided by Araslı in his selection, on a translation of which Hasrat'yan complains that he had to spend weeks and months, and then, one must say, partly because he hampers himself by an attempt to put it into rhymed and metrical Armenian, not very successfully. The recurrent rhyme is *khanajal*, which may be read as a common dialectal form of APTAz *khanjar*, *khānjār* (Georgian *khanjal-i*, *khanjar-i*) 'dagger', and permutations of APTAz *khân* 'prince, lord', APT *khân* 'house, inn, station, etc. (Steingass), APT *khâna*^h 'house, dwelling, page of letter, paper, verse, poetry, etc. (Steingass), Az *khânâ* 'cage' (Äzizbây), Georgian *khan-* 'time' (*khan-i* 'name of the letter *kh*' is perhaps irrelevant), PT *kh'ân* 'table and the meat upon it, spacious tray, household furniture', P *khânâ* 'legible' (acc. Steingass), with APT *ajall* 'very large, grand', APTAz *ajal*, *äjäl* '(fixed time of) death, APT *âjil* 'deferred, future', APT *'âjil* 'hasty, ready', T *acılı* 'sad' (Az *ajiligh* 'sadness'), P *jâl* T *câli* 'counterfeit', PT *jelâ* 'an expelling, banishing, going into exile' (Redhouse). Sayat'-Nova's lack of concern for final APT *-â*'s is well attested, and Persian and Turkish *izâfets* are ignored. What has been said in a parallel field, that of Hebrew puns in the Old Testament 'humour takes precedence over grammar' (Y.T. Rad-day, *On humour and the comic in the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield, 1990, p. 69), applies also to Sayat'-Nova's word-play. The first three verses of each stanza 2 - 5 comprise compound homophonous rhymes, of which only those of st. 2 are relatively clear; those of st. 3 are particularly intransigent, and the copyist whom, reproducing the poem in facsimile facing p. 33, H identifies (probably correctly, but the orthographic and metrical errors are then unexpected) as Sayat'-Nova himself, stumbles over the form, writing the *such'ola* of v. 1 badly in vv. 2 and 3 as *swoch'ola*. Any definitive translation of the poem, if such is possible, must be left to an Azeri expert, but since one is reluctant to bide one's time for another two hundred years, an attempt is made here as follows:

Doghru dur k'i yarday murvat' yokhimish.
zôr khur tur k'ovlum shêharin khanajal.
*ghashi k'aman*¹⁷ *zilp'i burghan ôkchimish.*
baghrum doghar dastinda var khanajal.

¹⁷ Text *k'amna*.

*Aghlum uch'mish balkh u bukhara dushmish.
dizlum k'abab eskhun bukhara dushmish.
nazlo¹⁸ yar zar gëimish bu khara dushmish.
gor, neja erashur yara khanajal.*

*Gôzum t'ôk'ar ghatël ôlmish such'ola.
bir dêmisham raghif ghahri such'ola¹⁹.
ager manday bundan ghayiağh such'ola¹⁹.
ispat' ëila gôzal janum khanajal.*

*Dim(e) gôzal sana harza galmisham.
ôkhudum lam u mim harz(a) galmisham.
ashujiranidan harz(a) ga(l)mish{i}am.
divan ëila etishuf tur khanajal.*

*Sayeat'nova nêilar shahi shahjamalin.
ich'mish fir ustaddan shahi {ha} shahjamalin.
istarsan gôrasan shahi shahjamalin.
ibrêim khalil t'ak' ghërkx gun khanajal.²⁰*

'It is true that in the beloved there has been no mercy.
She is contemptuous violence, a khan agile (*lit.* ready) in the (siege of) the
fortress (*lit.* city) of my heart.

Her eyebrows are a bow, her lovelock a gleaming arrow.
She batters²¹ my breast, there is a dagger in her hand.

My mind has flown away, and fallen in Balkh and Bukhâra.
My heart is a kebab, fallen into the steam [APTaz *bukhâr*] of your love.
The graceful beloved, having clothed herself in gold, has fallen into this
silk [TAz *bu*, APTaz *khârâ*²²].

See how elegant she is! For (her) beloved a very grand [APT *ajall*] dish
[PT *kh'ân*]!

My eye pours forth. Being slain, it expels water [TAz *su*, APT *jalâ*, *jelâ* 'an
expelling', Redhouse].

One (thing) I have said: may the observer's [APT *râqib*] mischief [APT
qahr] be a sin [TAz *such ola*].

If I by this am (as a) boat [TAz *qâyıq*] on a watery waste [TAz *su*, TAz
çöl, *chöl*]

¹⁸ Text *sic.*, for *nazli*.

¹⁹ Text *swoch'ola*.

²⁰ The annotation in Georgian following here (T 72) reads *K' ese t'ejnisi arut'inas nat'k'omi kargi (mêa)*, 'This *tejnîs* was recited by Arut'in; good; (*mêa*) [?'it is 47', possibly 447 of the chronicon, A.D. 1759; -a might also be a numeral, '1', possibly referring to the first month, January.

²¹ *doghâr* is a defective form from Az *tokhumaq* (listed by Äzizbäy only as 'weave', but cf. *tokhunmaq*, i.a. also 'attack, offend', T *dokunmak* 'touch, injure, excite emotion in the heart', Redhouse). A possible underlying image of the weaver's beating the woof may be of relevance to theories of the poet's apprenticeship.

²² 'Kind of watered silk stuff', Redhouse, '*kamka*' [damask], Äzizbäy.

Test, beauteous one, whether my life be a counterfeit script.²³

Do not speak (?) beauteous one. I have come to you for (to give you) information [APT *arz*].

I have read L and M [Leila and Majnûn]. I have come to present a petition [APT '*arz*].

Into the silly talk²⁴ of the lover's neighbours²⁵ I have come.

Judge (me), the time of death²⁶ is overtaking me.

Sayat'-Nova, what profit (to you is) royal beauty?

Having drunk from (the hand of) an old master, (that) is worth the property of a little king.²⁷

If you wish, you may see the beauty of the King of Kings.²⁸

Only for forty days was the Patriarch Abraham (in) the House of Exile' [? PT *khâna^h*, *jalâ*] [? Egypt]²⁹

Sayat'-Nova's *t'ejnis* is otherwise not of the extent and complication of the three poems mentioned above. Ioane, who in calling his father's enemies sons of garlic and onions who thought themselves pineapples shows himself capable of forming a striking metaphor,³⁰ uses the term *t'ejnisis khma* 'tejnîs mode' to subsume Georgian *igav-i* and *magalit'-i* (usually 'example, sample' as Tschenkeli and Meckelein, but here in the sense of its source, APT *maghlitah* 'argument devised to lead one into error' R), as 'allegory' in his note to his father's scarcely veiled attack on lightweight foes in the Georgian poem beginning 'How can the heat

²³ Az *ispad elâmâk* 'corroborate ones words by means of a document' (*podkrepyat' svoi slova dokumentom*, Âzizbây), T *ispat etmek* 'prove' (beweisen, Steuerwald); P *jâl* 'counterfeit', Steingass, T *câli* 'counterfeit, false', Steuerwald; P *kh^wânâ* 'legible', Steingass, or the better attested *khâna^h* in the sense of 'sheet of paper'. The German colloquial expression for one of doubtful character, *ein schräger Fürst*, might point to **khân-i jâl* 'a counterfeit prince', but probably only to Tbilisi's German merchant community.

²⁴ TAz *herze, härzä*.

²⁵ Reading *ashu(gh) jiranindan* (APT *jîrân* 'neighbours').

²⁶ Georgian *khan* 'time', APTAz *ajal*, 'time of death'. This proposed interpretation rests on a grammatically dubious construction, but this might be irrelevant in the pun-infested context.

²⁷ Reading *shâhja mâli*, with no great confidence.

²⁸ Reading P *shâhânshâh jamali*.

²⁹ This seems to be a reference to Abram and Sarah's sojourn in Egypt (*Gen.* 12, 10-20), which had as a consequence a plague on the Pharaoh; no figure is given in the OT for its length, but Sayat'-Nova or his legendary source may well have imagined it to last, like the Flood, for the Biblical and Turkish canonical forty days and nights. Sayat'-Nova's disregard of the final -â of borrowed APT words is otherwise well attested. Though the interpretation of the rhyme word as 'dagger' has already been clearly used in st. 1 v. 4, it would doubtless also seem appropriate here with reference to the Sacrifice of Isaac story (*Gen.* 22, 1-14).

³⁰ Annotation to *Damijere*, fol. 14A; see above, p. 141, n. 27.

of a star evaporate the ocean?', passing through a series of belittling images parallel to the English adage about the impossibility of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and ending with a boast of cosmic proportions.³¹ As an example of extended allegory without recourse to puns, it merits quotation in full in a chapter such as this. The text that follows is based upon Ioane's version (fol. 16A), collated with that of Baramidze (pp. 29-30):

*Zghvas rogor^a gaashrobs va(r)sk(v)lavis sitz'ke.^b
mtkvari tz'khrilit' rogor unda aitsqos^c
k'ari ras daaklebs k'vit'kirsad kldesa^e
t'u gind tslis-tslobamdis^f k'rola^g daitsqos.*

*t'evzi t'u gind^h dahkla ar daiqvirebs.ⁱ
p'ekht' hiniš^j dadeba rat' undat^k virebs.
k'visha bambis alags ar^l daichirebs,
t'u gind quf'nis sabania^m ch'aitsqos.*

*t'u gind gaat'et'ro spilendzis t'asiⁿ
spilendzi ert'ia, vertz'khli at'asi.
chikas ar mistz'emen^o almasis p'asi
t'u gind ok'ros bechedshia^p gaitsqos.*

*zogzogi katz'ia eshmakis musha.^q
eshmakis nasheni ghmert'man dap'usha.
gogro ar gakhdeba shirazis shusha,
ra gind maghla sarkmelshia^r shaitsqos.*

*es nu itqvi sazandari^s vina var.
anabana vitz'i, sitqvīt' shina^t var.
saiat'nova mk'vian, arut'ina var.
sitqvas vitqvi tz'am k'ukhili daitsqos.*

'How may the heat^u of a star evaporate the sea?
How can the Kur be emptied with a sieve?

a B vit', which leaves the hendecasyllabic verse a syllable short. **b** B *skhivi*. **c** B *airtsqos*. **d** B *-iris*. **e** B; I *mkldesa*. **f** B; I *tslis tslandis*, more usual, but making a verse a syllable short. **g** B *k'rolva*. **h** B *t'u gind t'evzi*. **i** This is v. 2 in B. **j** B; I *inis*. **k** B; I *unda*. **l** B *ver*. **m** B *-iatz'*. **n** B st. 2. **o** B *ar edeba* **p** B *-shiatz'*. **q** B's third stanza. **r** B *takhch'ashiatz'* **s** B *nurvin itqvīt' es qmatsvili*. **t** B *tsina*. **u** B ray

³¹ Fol. 16A. The annotation reads: *ese t'ejnisis khmazed nat'k'omi igavit' magalivit' landzghva saiat'novas t'akilavishi meta(d)re khsenebuli vakhtang batoni shvilt'an gadahkidebia, ushenuri katz'i ik've moukhsenebia ch'.gh.n.a* 'This is (a poem) recited in the *t'ejnis* form (in which) with allegory and imagery Sayat'-Nova impugns (his enemies) in contempt; in particular it is an incrimination with [auprès de; expressed to?] the late Crown Prince Vakhtang: a homeless man is there mentioned to him. In the year [A.D.] 1751.'

How can the wind wear out mortared stone,
Though it accumulate its blowing year upon year?

Though you kill a fish it will not cry out.
Why should one wish to put henna on donkeys' hooves?
Gravel will not be used instead of wadding
Should one wish to stuff a silken quilt.

Although one plates one's copper bowl,
Copper is worth one (coin), silver a thousand.
Glass does not command the price of diamond,
Though it be set in a golden ring.

Some men are labourers for the Devil,
God will destroy all their works.
You can't make a Shiraz glass out of a pumpkin,
However high it is set up in the window^v.

Let no-one ask, Who is this minstrel?^w
I know my ABC, I am articulate.
They call me Sayat'-Nova, I am Arut'in.
When I speak my word, the heavens will roll with thunder!'

Without too great a distortion of the literal meaning, this impressive poem lends itself to a metrical rhymed version in English:

Will the sea dry up in the heat of one star?
Can one empty the Kur with a sieve on its shore?
Though it apply its breath for years on end,
Will the wind a way through solid stone bore?

Club a fish: it will utter no sound.
Will henna on donkeys' hooves be found?
To stuff a silk quilt that has unwound,
Who in place of wadding will gravel pour?

Though your copper bowl in gold you enfold,
Copper is copper, and gold is gold.
Though a golden ring the glass bead hold,
A diamond is worth a thousand times more.

Some men will push the Devil's barrow.
Into the ground will God their works harrow!
You can't make crystal out of a marrow,
However high set up in window or door.

Let no-one ask, Who's that youth of no fame?
I know my letters, and the name of the game!
They call me Sayat'-Nova, Arut'in is my name.
When I speak, the heavens with thunder roar!

That this version is not so impressive as the original is only to be expected: with rare exceptions (of whom Stefan George is one), the translator is doomed to be second best.

Puns, allegories, word-plays of all sorts pervade Sayat'-Nova's work. Veiled allusions, words not to be taken only at their face value, a skill favoured before him by Azeri and Georgian poets, but rarely by Armenians (though the 16th century K'uch'ak Nahapet did his best to veil his more erotic images), he takes so much for granted that he imputes it to his real or imaginary mistresses, using the terms *arak* and *masal* (APT *mithâl*, T vulg. *maşâl*):

Mart' piti hamasha beranēt tēndghe,
*Khosk is asum arakavur-masalov.*³²

'A man must ever hang on your lips.
You speak with proverbs and allegories.'

Allegorical word-play, the *ὀνόνοια* and *ambages tacitae* of the Greeks and Romans, is classed in Islam and societies under its cultural influence as *tejnîs*, a word based on APT *jîns* from Greek *γένος*, meaning 'making homogeneous, resemblance, analogy, alliteration, jingle of rhymes, pun, play on words' (Steingass), which appears in its Georgian form *t'ejnisi* in the annotations to the *Tetrak* and Ioane's St. Petersburg MS no. 222. That such word-play was not for amusement only is seen from the example of the Greek oracles at Delphi, etc., which on occasions carefully guarded their reputations by an ambiguous use of words and grammar. Homer conceived puns as concealing great truths, as in the *Odyssey*, in which Penelope describes the house of dreams as having two gates, one of horn (*κέρας*) that would fulfil (*κραίνειν*) one's dreams, and one of ivory (*ἐλέφας*) by which they would be frustrated (*ἐλεφαίρεσθαι*) (*Od.*, 19, 562-7). The Hebrew Bible is rich in word-play, sometimes designated as *mashâl* which is usually translated as 'proverb, parable, riddle', to the extent that a prophet, Ezekiel, is ignored by his audience as a 'maker of parables' (*mēmashshêl mēshâlîm* (*Ez.*, 20,49)).³³ Puns abound, e.g. the explanation of Babel by *ballal* 'confound' (*Gen.* 11,9), the distortion of Beelzebul 'Lord of Glory' as Beelzebub 'Lord of the Flies' (*Matt.*, 10,25). The puns on Nâbal, David's adversary in

³² T p. 114, I fol. 58A, H p. 32.

³³ R.P. Carroll, 'Is humour also among the prophets?', in Y.T. Radday and A. Brenner, *On humour and the comic in the Hebrew Bible*, The Almond Press: Sheffield, 1990, p. 187, n. 1.

1 Sam. 25, a name which surely only seems to mean 'fool', and which is explained by his wife Abigail by his 'foolishness' (*nblh*), she who brings about his destruction by two *nably yyn* ('jars of wine'), and many others in the same episode, have been exhaustively analysed by Moshe Garsiel.³⁴

Whatever the main language of a particular poem may be, Sayat'-Nova's puns are not restricted to that particular language. Thus in his major 1759 Armenian Ode beginning *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê, t'agherumen bezaril im* 'This world is a cage, I am tired of the vaults',³⁵ 'vault' is only one possible rendering of *t'agh* (Georgian *t'agh-i*), borrowed from APTAz *tâq, tâgh* 'arch, window, balcony' (S), which is itself in those languages used metaphorically (P *tâq-i abrû* 'arch of the eyebrow', *tâq bar-nihâdan* 'forget, omit', *bar tâq nihâdan* 'promote to the highest rank', etc), as well as being a homophone of the onomatopoeic PTaz *tâq, tak, tâqq* 'knocking sound, bang' (T *tak demek* (*etmek*) *canına* 'become unbearable', Steuerwald; P *tâq û turumb* 'knocking and drumming', 'pomp, pride', Steingass). The most obvious meaning to an Armenian would be Arm. *t'agh* 'quarter of a town', which could fit the context, which is doubtfully the case of Arm. *t'agh, taghi* 'felt'. In the fourth line of stanza 3 of the same ode, PTaz *âghâ* 'lord, master' may adequately explain *agh-*: *K'ēsānēn me ghul ch'in pahum, agherumen bezaril im* 'Twenty cannot maintain one servant, I am tired of masters.' TAz *âq, âgh* 'white, white material' will hardly come into it, nor will Arm. *agh* 'salt', which serve, however, as a warning not to go too far in looking for alternative meanings. But T *agh* 'net, (spider) web' (Hony) would encounter no objection as an overtone from the poet. Although he may, being an Oriental — in this no more extreme than the author of the *Song of Songs*, an obvious favourite of his, as witness his choice of this work to copy when he became a monastery scribe — enthuse upon the pomegranates of his beloved's bosom,³⁶ to which he devotes, mainly in Georgian, particular attention, he comes over as one of a delicate and pure, though passionate, turn of mind. He is no Chaucer

³⁴ 'Wit, words, and a woman: 1 Samuel 25', *ibid.*, pp. 163-167.

³⁵ T p. 133, I fol. 63A, H p. 70.

³⁶ *shenî ubis brotseulis namali ver mishovia* 'I cannot attain the secret place of the pomegranates of your bosom', in *Ra zarhabi*, st. 5, v. 3, B p. 49; cf. *Dzirp'asisa qirmizisa chia var, / ubeshi nadebi utz'kho bia var* 'I am a worm in your priceless crimson, / I am a wild quince placed in your bosom', in *Aset'i tquli* 'Such a lie', st. 3, vv. 1-2, B p. 41; *ubeshi gak'vs vardis kona* 'In (your) bosom you have a bouquet of roses', in *Kokobi dzudzut' gazrdilo* 'The buds of your teats have grown', st. 3, v. 2, B p. 43.

or Shakespeare, and would be as aghast, one feels, as Browning on learning that he had been the unwitting perpetrator of an obscenity. The danger of puns, however, is that a punster may be out-punned by his listeners, who may see in a word rather more than the poet intended. In the phrase *karmir vart'ēn kharin mēnatz'*,³⁷ surely intended to mean 'the crimson Rose remained within her thorns (*khar*)', the romantic poet would almost certainly not have wished this audience to interpret this as 'the *membrum virile* (*khari*) remained in the Rose', as any Tiflis *kinto* or hawker knowledgeable of Armenian could well have done. On the other hand, would a public performer of satirical lampoons against such as the Catholicos Anton, and whose wit has been compared, though perhaps unjustly, with that of the *kinto*, have been so unaware? And what of the images in his 1758 ode *Modēt nēstoghēn* 'He who sits by you', possibly an epithalamium that invites comparison with Sappho's famous erotic ode 'He who sits by you seems the equal of the gods'?

*Êrtsat'e kokhpek'ov kokhpats, dun oske řaza is, aziz.*³⁸

'Bolted with a silver ring, you are a golden staple, noble one'

and

*Tesnoghēn nakhshēt ku tēndghe p'arshevangi bēmbuli pēs*³⁹

'He who sees your picture will swell up like the tail-feathers of the peacock.'

When one considers that *kokhp-ek'* must derive ultimately from APT *qufl* 'lock', which has in Persian a special usage in *qufl-i farj-i astar* 'a ring of gold or silver fastened on the genitals of a mule to prevent her being covered' (Steingass), and how, with respect to the golden staple, seafaring men of England would have to be forgiven for bringing the

³⁷ *Êndur ach'kēs ch'ē tz'amak'um*, st. 2, v. 4, T p. 128, H p. 49.

³⁸ *Modēt nēstoghēn*, st. 2 v. 4, I fol. 69, H p. 56. For a comparison with Sappho's ode, see below, Chapter Nine, pp. 385-394. Malkhasyantz' derives *koghpek'* (though the form must be a plural in *-k'* still active in the Tiflis Armenian dialect) directly from APT *qufl* 'lock, bar, bolt' (S), but the consonants and their order point to T *kelebe^h* and beyond that to P *kalaf* 'padlock' (explained by Steingass as 'for *kuf*', which he does not list, but by which he probably means A *qufl*, though the discrepancy in gutturals is unusual. Az *kālāf* is listed by Äzizbāy only in the sense of 'thread of spun material or hair', though the prior meaning is retained in the Az diminutive *kālāfchā* 'pulley' (*krutilo*). *řaza* is APTAz *razzat^{un}*, *raza^h*, *reze^h*, *rāzā* 'a staple or hasp into which a bolt shoots' (Redhouse), from A *razza* 'insert'; cf. *koghpek'ēn ku dēnim, dzir řazēn is im* 'I shall place locks, I am your bolt', *Makhukhn u och'khari misē* 'Bran soup and mutton', st. 6 v. 4, H p. 77.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, st. 4 v. 1. Cl. Arm. *intlim* 'swell, tumefy' (Bedrossian), dialectal Mod. Arm. *intghel*, aor. *tutghetz'ay* 'swell up' (Malkhasyantz').

golden rivet to mind, one must wonder what hope these images had of escaping the ribaldry of the populace of Tiflis. It is possible that the ring and staple image may refer (and one must remember that Sayat'-Nova is a master of the (usually innocent) *double-entendre*) to the beloved's careful seclusion, Oriental-style, under lock and key (German *unter Schloss und Riegel*) would be a more literal translation of the Armenian), as it were a bird in a golden cage. That this was not held to be an unenviable lot, but rather a privilege, a demonstration of care and attention, is shown by the poet's own (tongue-in-cheek) desire to be kept in such luxury himself:

*Sayat'nova mogakhsenebs: shen vardi khar, me bulbuli.
ch'amsvi ok'ros qapazashi, nushis lebani mindoda.*⁴⁰

'Sayat'-Nova tells you: 'You are the Rose, I am the Nightingale.
Put me in a golden cage: I shall want only half the kernel of an almond!'

The first verses of the Armenian poem seem, however, to have prepared one for what look like fairly explicit sexual images:

*Modēt nēstoghēn ku harp'i, dun bang u boza iz, aziz.
Divana P'ahlul ku shinis tesnoghin, aza is, aziz.*⁴¹

'He who sits near you becomes intoxicated: you are drugs and drink, noble one.

You turn your beholder into a Mad Fahlûl; you are a love-potion, noble one.'

On the other hand, the beloved is compared more innocently with *mezze*, sugar, pearls, the hyacinth, a falcon, so that images more fitting of Roman Priapics give one pause. Nevertheless, the poem is an epithalamium, and few wedding celebrations pass without a bit of spice. Moreover, Orientals are demonstrably less squeamish in their attitude to sexual matters and their vocabulary than most Westerners, and one would have to go not further than the Qur'an for proof of that. Sayat'-Nova, with these two verses, is doing no more than would be expected of a minstrel at a wedding.

⁴⁰ *Galobs t'ut'i* 'The parrot squawks', st. 5 v. 4. Baramidze, p. 36.

⁴¹ St. 1 vv. 1-2. The emendation by Hasrat'yan of *jaza* 'punishment', to be used as the rhyme-word of st. 3 v. 4 (*Me dzerēt jur, me dzerēt arun, dun jallat'i jaza is, aziz* 'In your one hand water, in the other hand blood, you are the executioner's punishment, noble one') to **aza* (p. 246) is accepted above, but not with his meaning of 'torment' (APT ǃǃ *'adhâ'*), the Azeri usage of which, as 'mourning', being even less appropriate, but that of T *eza* for APT *'ajzâ, ecza* 'drugs, chemicals' (Hony), which fits the context exactly, and is translated as 'love-potion' above. Fahlûl or Bahlûl is the 'name of a celebrated dervish', Arabian legendary romantic wanderer, basically 'one who laughs or smiles, a jester, joker' (S), out of inanity, of course (cf. Sayat'-Nova's *khumari var* 'I am a jester').

It is in Azeri that Sayat^c-Nova indulges most in *tejnîs*, which annotations divide into various categories. One called *t'ejnisi shahmohrla* (*tejnîs* with PT *shâhmuhra*^h 'king's seal', 'precious stone said to be found in a serpent's mouth or a dragon's head', Steingass) contains the syllable *khas* (APT *khâşş* 'special, private, own, select, noble', Steingass, also 'special to the sovereign, fine white bread', Redhouse, Az *khâs* also '(bread) well baked, baked brown', Äzizbây) three times in each of the poem's twenty verses, presumably considered as the jewel, but which does not make for memorable verse.⁴² The poet inserts an alphabetic cryptogram in st. 2, v. 4: *lami khas dur alip^c khas zatⁱ khas* 'There is a special L, a special A, in itself special', in which one is presumably meant to read, the previous verse mentioning a *khas gulistan* 'private garden', PTaz *lâla, lâlä* 'tulip', or P *lâlâ* 'anemone, water-lily' (Steingass), or P *lâl* 'ruby' (but hardly PTaz *lâl* 'dumb').⁴³ A similar production in which Az *bu* 'this' is so repeated, though in nine of the sixteen verses only twice instead of three (a feature improved (?) on by Hasrat^cyan in his Armenian translation in which he includes the equivalent *êş* in 15 verses⁴⁴), is saved for posterity by Ioane, who annotates it as a *shumara t'ejnisi* 'a *tejnîs* of number' (P *shumâra*^h), which fairly describes its arithmetical essence. It begins with images of the beloved compared with his humble self:

*Bu nazani, bu saghi, bu dur dur,
bu hak'ak^c dur, bu mohuri, bu iazar ...*

'This (is) a gracious one, this a cupbearer, this is a pearl,
This is a mischief-maker, this an under-clerk, this a writer ...'

It ends on a typical note of despair:

*Bu saiat^cnovani bu darda saldi,
bu dugandur, bu qamza dur, bu iazar.*

'This cast this Sayat^c-Nova into this agony.
This is double(-dealing),⁴⁵ this is coquetry. This (poor?) writer!'⁴⁶

There may be some merit in this deliberately highly repetitive poem, but on the whole one may be glad, in the words of Ioane at the foot of his

⁴² T p. 18; the poem is carefully written in Georgian script, most probably by the poet's own hand.

⁴³ H p. 172, translating (in Armenian) 'Two special *lyuns*, a special *ayip*', a special line', opts for *lal* (*lâl*).

⁴⁴ H p. 199.

⁴⁵ P *dugân* 'double'.

⁴⁶ Ioane, fol. 29A. The text must be partly corrupt, his fourth verse of st. 1 being a repetition of v. 2; but the repeated rhyme *bu yazar* must be right.

page, though he doubtless did not intend them to be construed ironically, 'there will not be ten thousand such examples'.⁴⁷

Another form of *t'ejnis* specified by an annotation in the *Tetrak* is the *haqana t'ejnisi* which probably means 'allegory of the Day of Judgment' (APT *hâqqah*^h '(what is) sure, impending (calamity), day of judgment', Steingass), 'resurrection and last judgment', Redhouse). This begins

Bu dünya vaghia dur bilana.
bugun sagh gezanlar sabah iat'aghin.
bu duniada k'imsa qalmaz bilana.
*ajal a(i)akhda tak'burmish iat'aghin.*⁴⁸

'This world is a dream for one who knows!
 Those who walk healthy today, in the morning are bedridden.
 No-one remains in this world, for one who knows!
 At Death's foot he with the prayer for the dead
 said over him is bedridden.'

Thus *t'ejnis* is used here in the sense of a mystic poem, legitimately so, life being itself a riddle, and possibly an allegory.

An Azeri love-poem is called by Ioane, but not so annotated in the *Tetrak*, as 'in the *t'ejnis* voice (*khma*)'. Ioane further calls it a *zanjilama* (TAz *zincirleme*, *zānjirlāmā*), a concatenation, in the sense that the final rhyme-word of a preceding stanza (in the present case the recurrent rhyme in *-akht*) is repeated as the first word of the following stanza. It is further designated by Ioane and in the *Tetrak* as a *iedaglama* (TAz *yedekleme*, *yedāklāmā*) 'a taking in tow', which refers to the same feature.⁴⁹ On the surface it is a fairly conventional lover's complaint; but as the final stanza indicates, it contains many ambiguities. The poem is a long one, composed of 51 verses arranged in stanzas of 6, 6, 10, 10, 9 (Ioane only 8, probably planned to be 10), 10 verses respectively. Each verse is composed mainly of five syllables, three having only four, six having six, and one seven syllables, Hasrat'yan doing scholarship no

⁴⁷ *bevri ar ik'neba amisi tz'ali.*

⁴⁸ T p. 92, H (inexact Armenian verse translation), p. 222.

⁴⁹ I fol. 24A, *ese zanjilama doshama iedaglama t'ejnisis khmazed*, T p. 73, *es iedaglama doshama arut'inas nat'k'omia mXa* [the second letter of this final group, which is a numeral, is indistinct, possibly Թ Է = 8, though this gives a ten and two units, 40.8.1 (or 48a), which is inadequate as a date]. The term *doshama* seems to represent TAZ *dōşeme*, *dōshāmā*, 'spreading, laying down, making a floor or pavement or bridge, furnishing a room, floor, furnishings', which Hasrat'yan, p. 271, note to 81, takes to refer to the uninterrupted style of delivery required, a sort of chirping (*chirvogh*). Perhaps it is rather a faulty form of TAZ *dōşenme*, *dōshānmā* in the sense of 'lying sick in bed' (Steuerwald, *Äzizbây*), describing the assumed mentality of the love.

great service in stating in his note that the verse is pentasyllabic and presenting a thus regularised Armenian verse translation, which, often *metri gratia* but often gratuitously, fudges as number of important statements in the poem. The text is as follows:

*Daria olmish eskhkhum
chalkheir novum
sana qurban ozum
ey ruhi pardakht
dil shirin shirbakht
khaltlu zin(s)akht.*

*Zin(s)akhtan qaraghisan
gulbu t'aghisan
sach^e ia t'aghisan
sarin^a ziri rakht
shop'aghi andakht
shohle dar harvakht.^b*

*Harvakht har sahat^c
iar geimish khalat^c
varmaz khajalat^c
jamala salvat^c
iazar seis(a)t^c
jahani edar mat^c
iar istamish at^c
baghlu q(i)zil rakht
bandi geimish t'akht
jilovu jila(kh)t.^c*

*Lakht rostrom zalun
jaglama qalun
bab iokh^d gozalun
qan boimish alun
ai dur jamalun
ilduz dur khalun
gel ach'ginan malun
javair zurmakht
ei khurda p'arakht
aql mandan bakht.*

*Bakhtes^e aql bandan
o(l)misham jandan
mala ik'taddan^f
gozum tolmish^g qandan*

a I; T *sahrin*. **b** I represents these two verses as *shop'al viar (?) ar vakht*. **c** I represents these two verses as only *ch'ilov ch'ilakht*. **d** I *babi iokh*. **e** I *bakhtis aql mandan*. **f** I *ik'tat'dan* **g** I *tomish*.

zar hariandan
 aghlimish^h andan
 k'ovlum durmush (sh)akht
 durar olmaz akht^{hh}
 dilum dur anakht.ⁱ

Anakhtar dil durar
 chokh gap'igh^h ach'ar
 davt'ara surch'ar
 bad sozin sech'ar
 k'im p'ir jami^k ach'ar
 sardan vaz gech'ar
 saiat'nova^l bich'ar
 miskhali dut'akht^m
 dard mana b.rakht
 p'irum et'ma sakht.ⁿ

My love is all at sea.
 My ship is tossing.
 May I die for you,
 O shining soul,
 Sweet of tongue, distributor of milk,^o
 Ornament of high quality^p.

You are one drowned (?)^q in your ornaments.
 You are a rose-scented melon^r.
 You are a bed of hair,
 (On) your head a cubit of cloth (?)^s,

h I *aghleimish*. **hh** I omits verse. **i** I *anakh*. **j** I *qup'l*. **k** I; Tetrak *p'irjamn*. **l** I *-novam*. **m** I; T *dut'akh*. **n** I reverses the order of these last two verses. **o** Probably for *shir-bakhsh*; cf. *shirbakh(sh)* as name of 'a yellow root growing in Hindustan and Kashmir' (Steingass). **p** A conjectural rendering, reading *khalt* as APT *khallat* 'nature, quality (good or bad)', though one would expect *-t'*, a consideration which excludes APT *khil'at* 'robe of honour', occurring below as the normal *khalat'*; APT *khalad* 'heart, mind, soul' (S), and APT *khalt* 'mixing, confusion, disturbing, association with others, intercourse' (R; 'always rude in Modern Turkish', Prof. Geoffrey Lewis) might be meant. *zinakht* is very problematic, and may be a mistake for *zinsakht* from APT *zayn*, *zeyn* 'ornament, adornment' (Redhouse) + P *sâkht* 'made', i.e. P *zayn-i sâkht* 'an ornamental artefact'; a pronunciation with the *izâfat* would make the four-syllabled verse the required pentasyllabic. Professor Lewis hazards AT *dht-nakhît*, *zi-nakhît* 'possessor of haughtiness'; the accentuated final syllable makes this an unlikely rhyme-word, but it might have served as an approximate pun. **q** Reading APT *gharaq* 'submerged, drowned'; as a double meaning, T *qirâghî* (*kirağî*) 'hoar-frost' may be intended as a symbol for a cold-hearted lover. **r** Reading P **gul-bû* 'rose-scented', and Az *tagh* 'melon' (as in *Sâhâr shâbnâm olar, qîz gâzâr baghî / dârâr shamamanî, sindirar taghî* 'In the morning the dew falls, the girl goes to the garden, gathers the honey-melon, picks the speckled melon' (Ahundov and Tezcan, *Azerbaycan halk yazını örnekleri*, Ankara, 1978, p. 116). Hasrat'yan's *varderi chyughk'n es* 'You are a branch of roses' must be predicated on P *tâk* 'vine-tendril', but *-k* does not give *-gh*. **s** APT *zirâ* 'cubit', PT *rakht* 'clothing' (P *zirâ'-i rakht*).

Casting forth the dawn,^t
Ever radiant.^u

Every day, every hour,
The beloved has put on a (new) robe.
There is no shame (in that).
Her beauty is a remedy-for-grief.
Thirty hundred write (that).
She checkmates the world.
(If) she wishes for a horse,
It is dressed in red harness.
It dons as (back)pack (saddle) a throne,
Its bridle a shining necklace (?)^v

Mace^w of Rustahm (son of) Zal.
Warfare^x is (in) your word(s).
There is no gate (proof against) your beauty.
Your hand is stained with blood.
Your beauty is the moon.
Your mole is a star.
Come, disclosing your riches,
Jewel, hater of lies^y.
O extoller of small(-things) (?)^z,
I have lost my mind.^{aa}

Look, quickly^{bb} (my) mind (has gone) from me.
I have died in my soul
Because of hard labour^{cc} for money.
My eye has filled with blood,
Groaning from every side
Weeping because of calumny^{dd},
My heart is folded thin^{ee}.

t APTAz *shafaq*, *shäfäq*. **u** AP *shu'la^h-dâr* 'radiant'; in *shohle-* for APTAz *shu'la^h, shö'lä*, the *-h-* for *-ʿ-* is of phonetic interest. **v** Az *jilov* 'bridle' (Äzizbäy), APTAz *jilâ* 'brightness', P *'aqd* (listed by Steingass for APT *'iqd*) 'collar, necklace', the construction being something like *jilovu jilâ-i 'aqd* 'its bridle a collar of brightness'? **w** PT *lakht* 'iron club, helmet' (Steingass gives also the meaning 'horse's mane', not given by Red-house). **x** Although no Turkish or Azeri verb **cenklemek, jänglämäk* is listed, such an interpretation based on TAz *cenk, jäng* 'war, battle' fits the context. **y** Reading APT *zûr* 'lie', *maqt* 'hate', not *zôr* 'power', *miqat* 'loving', though a pun may be intended. **z** Or 'extolled small thing'? P *khurda^h* 'small', *farakht-* (*farâkhtan* 'extol'); perhaps an equivalent of PT *khurda^h-dân, khurda^h-shinâs* 'sagacious, discerning, versed in minutiae', *khurda^h-bîn* i.a. 'possessed of acute perception' (R). **aa** "Intelligence from me is lost-at-play" (P *bâkhta* 'play, lose at play', S). **bb** Reading *bakhtes*, I *bakhtis* as Az *bakh tez*. **cc** AT *ikdâd*, given as 'parsimony' by R, but here with more of the sense of its Arabic root *kadda* 'require constant exertion in seeking a thing' (Lane); not listed as P by S. **dd** Reading as PT *andâ(-dan)*; PT *and-dan* 'from an oath' would be phonetically better, though less likely semantically, and SN's ignoring of final *-â* in Islamic loans is well attested. **ee** Reading T *dürmüş* from *dürmek* 'gather, roll, or fold (as cloth)' (R),

She folds (it, but) no knot^{ff} forms.
 My tongue remains unknotted^{gg}.
 The tongue stands (as) a key.
 It opens many locks^{hh}.
 The notebook, alas, makes a slip,
 Chooses a bad word.
 Whosoever tastes (*lit.* breaches) the master's cup
 Renounces (the dictates of his) head.
 Sayat'-Nova is incurable.
 His coin is double-sidedⁱⁱ.
 (Love's) pain poured^{jj} over me.
 Master, be not hard on me!

As the final stanza makes clear, some of the poem is ambiguous (*dut'akh(t)*, as it were two-faced). The tongue, i.e. the way the words are variously pronounced and analysed, provides the key to the riddles ('opens many locks'). The reference to the notebook (*davt'ar*) is interesting, since the only such writing executed by the poet is the *Tetrak*, and it is certainly a fact that there is many a slip, a 'bad word', in that. In the case of this Azeri poem, such inaccuracy may have been deliberate, or at least permissible, as long as an approximation made sense. It is difficult for us, more than two centuries later, to hope to seize all the undertones no doubt present in such a poem. The great number of Persian loans suggests that it was not likely to be easy to interpret fully at the time and in the place of its recital. As in many of his more straightforward odes, it is legitimate to see in a context in one language a meaning in a similar form in another language (as witness *t'agh* in the first verse of *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ê*, meaning different things in Persian/Turkish and Armenian). It may seem a tall order to expect audiences in T'elavi and Tiflis to grasp the many and various word-plays in

possibly an interesting image from the cloth-trade; but cf. *Az dūrmāk* 'bread rolled into tubular shape', *dūrmāklāmāk* 'roll food into bread (into *chōreks*) in the shape of tubes' (Äzizbāy). **ff** Reading *akht* as APT 'aqd. **gg** Reading as hybrid Arm. *an* + APT 'aqd; Arm. *an-akht* 'not subject to illness, passion, innocent, pure' (Bedrossian), phonetically accurate, clearly obtrudes; Persian privative *a* + APT *naht* 'chiding, scolding', i.e. 'not scolding' may be possible; Ioane's *anakh* would point to Arm. **an-akh* 'not uttering *akh*, without a sigh'; see commentary below. **hh** I *qap'i* better represents APT *qufl* 'lock'; T *qap'igh*, lectio difficilior, may represent a more ancient borrowing, with Cl. *l* (becoming Modern *gh*) from A l. **ii** *Az misghal*. *dut'akht* is either a mistake for P *dū-tâh* 'double', or *-takht* 'throne, seat, etc.' is used as the face of a coin (cf. P *takht-i mîl* 'writing board for a stylus', PT *takhta*^h i.a. 'tablet, writing board, single sheet of paper', Arm. lwd. *takhtak* 'flat piece of wood, metal, etc.; SN could ignore the final APT *-a*^h). **jj** Reading *b.rekht* as P *ba-rekht* 'was pouring'.

Azeri, Persian, Turkish, Armenian and Georgian, but one must consider the multicultural nature of the Caucasus. A valid parallel in the sphere of cryptography is provided in Britain by *The Times*' crossword, solved by hundreds if not thousands daily, and which calls not only for an extensive knowledge of English history and literature, and science, but also some knowledge of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, even Russian and Malay — and that from an insular people not famous for the linguistic expertise one rightly associates with Armenians.

The difficulties of the poem are not long in making themselves felt. One can only guess at what the final rhyme-word of st. 1, forming according to the rules of the verse form the first word of st. 2, viz. what is written, twice, as *zinakht*, is supposed to mean, and one proposes an emendation to *zinsakht*, understanding this as APT *zeyn* 'ornament, adornment' (Redhouse) + P *sâkht* 'made', i.e. P **zeyn-i sâkht* 'a made(-up) ornament' only with the greatest misgivings; as it stands, the verse of four syllables is one short, and a pronunciation with the Persian *izâfat* would give the regular pentasyllabic verse. One hesitates to think that the poet means the normal APT *zînat* 'decoration, ornament', for to choose a faulty form as the basis for recurrent rhymes in *-akht* would be hardly permissible; the *-akht* is important, since one can be fairly sure that however else it may be interpreted in APT, the poet must be inviting his listeners' minds to dwell upon Armenian *akht* 'illness, passion' as in *akht* and *anakht* of verses 8 and 8 of st. 5, otherwise comprising APT *'aqd* 'knot'. However, the remark in st. 6, vv. 3-4, that 'the notebook, alas, makes a slip, / chooses a bad word', cannot but make one wonder whether the poet is prepared to tamper with the normal phonetic structure of the words, as well as, one suspects, the grammar.

gulbut'aghi- (st. 2, v. 2), interpreted above as P **gul-bû* + Az *tagh* 'rose-scented melon', might also suggest, though the *-t'* is firm, PT *gul*, *gül* + TAz *bûdâq*, *budaq* 'shoot in a tree that will become a branch' (Redhouse), i.e. *gül budagh-i* 'rose-branch'. Some might also hear in it PT *gul*, *gül* 'rose', PT *but* 'idol, beautiful boy or girl', and, with a pessimism not untypical of Sayat'-Nova, Az *aghî* 'lament for the dead' (Ahundov, *op. cit.*, p. 450, T *ağit*); or Az *agh-* 'white(ness)' (T *aq*) — hardly T *aq* 'net' or T and Arm. lwd. *aghu* 'poison'.

In *sahrin* (I *sarin*) *ziri rakht* (st. 2, v. 4), *sa(h)r-* has been interpreted above, following the mention of *sach'* 'hair' in v. 3, in accordance with Ioane's reading, i.e. PT *sar* 'head'. But there must be a reason for the *Tetrak*'s *-h-*, which suggests (apart from APTAz *sahar*, *sähär* 'early

dawn', which will not fit the context) APT *sâhîr* 'enchanter, magician', as used in P *zulf-i sâhîr* 'an enchanting lock of hair' (Steingass), *sâhîrî* 'enchantment, magic'. *ziri rakht*, interpreted tentatively above as P *zirâ-i rakht* 'a cubit of cloth', could be P *zîr-i rakht* 'under the dress', the whole verse referring thus to the magic concealed beneath the beloved's apparel. In most literatures double-entendres are commonly of an erotic nature.

The opening word of st. 5, picking up the final rhyme of st. 4 (straightforwardly APTAz *bakht*, *bākht* 'luck'), *bakhtes*, I *bakhtis* is typical of Sayat'-Nova's word-play. It is read above as Az *bakh*, *tez* 'look, quickly' (TAz *baqmaq*, *bakhmaq* 'look, see', PTaz *tez* 'quickly'), the devoicing of the final -z in Turkish being common. An Armenian, however, might hear the form as Arm. *bakhtēs* 'my luck', which is how Hasrat'yan interprets it in his Armenian version. One can be sure that Sayat'-Nova, although such a mixture of grammars is unusual even for him, would have approved.

Apart from the word-play, there are doubtless images in the poem that have a cryptic meaning that may well elude the poet's readers two centuries later, but which may have been picked up by his contemporary Caucasian audience. Stanza 5 declares that the poet's heart is folded thin, presumably sliced up into thin layers like folds of cloth, which might count as a further indication that the poet had originally to do with the cloth trade (though, as noted above, an image from the world of the baker or pastry-cook might fit as well), but when the beloved folds it, no knot (*'aqd*) forms. This would appear to mean that no entanglement ensues, which is not the experience the normal romantic lover confesses: more typical is the 16th-century K'uch'ak Nahapet's complaint that his spirit and soul are congested in his head,⁵⁰ i.e. that he is knotted up inside. The following verse states that his tongue — it is more reasonable to take *dil* in this, its normal Turkish and Azeri meaning than 'heart', that of Persian *dil*, for which he has in the preceding verse used the Azeri *k'ovul* — remains *anakht*, a most ambiguous form. The most obvious meaning, to an Armenian, is Arm. *an-akht* 'without illness or passion, innocent, pure', while Ioane's variant *anakh* likewise suggests

⁵⁰ *T'e shunch's u hokis g'ases, na yegav klukhēs gudetz'av*, A. Ghukasyan (ed.), *Nahapet K'uch'ak, hayreni kargav*, Erevan, 1957, p. 150, no. 234, v. 2; A. Ch'obanian, *Hayrēnneru burastanē*, Paris, 1940, p. 193, no. 7; my translation in A.T. Hatto, *Eos, an enquiry into the theme of lovers' meetings and partings at dawn in poetry*, Mouton: The Hague, 1965, p. 252.

an Armenian **an-akh* 'without an Akh!, without crying Alas!', perhaps an example of the slips referred to in st. 5. The Armenian poet would not have objected to such an interpretation. But the poem is in Azeri, after all. -*an* is no privative prefix in Turkish, but the word could be a hybrid Arm. *an* + APT 'aqd meaning 'unknotted', a claim this least tongue-tied of troubadours could most legitimately make. On strictly phonetic principles, *kh* not being a normal representative of A *h* (PT pron. *h*), one hesitates to propose a Persian **â-naht* 'without scolding, without censure' (of the beloved), or another hybrid Arm. *an-* + APT 'ahd 'request, pact, treaty, promise' (in Armeno-Turkish written *ah*'), also in the sense of (New) Testament) in the sense of 'making no request or giving no promise'. Apart from Arm. *akht* and *anakht*, which might seem unfair on purely Azeri listeners, it is APT 'aqd 'knot' that most strongly asserts itself. This could be the (AP)T 'uqda'i *khâtir* 'the knot of the mind, spiritual tie', used in the erotic sense of an 'amorous bond' physically loosed by the lover by the 18th-century Ottoman poet Nedîm: 'Whenever we hasten to loosen the knot (that binds) our soul, The eyebrows of that proud idol become full of frowns'⁵¹. The knot, however, has other connotations which might conceivably raise the question of how deeply was the Georgian-Armenian Sayat'-Nova versed in Islamic religion and folklore. His mystic Azeri poems suggest by their very existence that he was not impervious to the influence of Islam, as one can safely assume no inhabitant of Tiflis was likely to be, surrounded by its faithful and influenced by its culture. There is an Arabic proverb which uses the image of a knot in cloth in a very sinister way: 'She is a knot in my shroud',⁵² which means that the woman in question will be the death of me, will torment me beyond the grave. The Islamic scriptures also refer to dangerous knots: In the 113rd sura of the Qur'an, that entitled of the Dawn (al-Falaq), one of the shortest well suited to serve as a popular apotropaic prayer, the Muslim asks the Lord of the Dawn to save him from the evil of women who blow on knots (*an-naffâthât fi'l-uqadi*), which, as George Sale explains in his valuable commentary to

⁵¹ 'Uqda'i *khâtiri biz halla şitâb etdikçe / o but serkaşın abrûlari pur çin oldu*, translated by Gibb as 'What time soever we haste to loose the knot that binds our soul, The eyebrows of yon froward idol many a frown of anger wears', *op. cit.*, vi.245, iv.44.

⁵² (*Fulânih*) 'uqdit *kafanî*, S. Abbûd, M. Thilo, G. Kampffmeyer, *5000 arabische Sprichwörter aus Palästina*, Mitteilungen des Seminars für orientalische Sprachen an der Universität Berlin, Beiband 3, Jahrgang xxxv, xxxviii, xl, Berlin, 1933, 1936, 1937, no. 3200.

his English translation, refers to witches, of a sort known also to Virgil and the French, who seek to enchant their victims by tying knots in a cord, blowing on it while casting a spell, and hiding it, Muḥammad himself according to tradition having been so bewitched by a cord of eleven knots hidden in a well by a Jewish wizard until he was rescued from his illness by Gabriel, who showed him where the cord was hidden and instructed him to repeat the eleven verses of Suras 113 and 114, one verse over each knot until they were successively undone. This possible connection of Sayat'-Nova's beloved with witchcraft would link up with the possible *sâhirî* 'enchantment' of stanza 2. On the other hand, although an Azeri Muslim might have read such an allusion into the poem, one cannot guarantee that any such idea was in Sayat'-Nova's mind. The setter of a puzzle may not be aware of all possible solutions. The modern playwright Harold Pinter is on record as saying that he does not consider himself the best interpreter of his plays just because he wrote them. The Muse often has tricks of her own.

It is, then, in his Azeri verse that Sayat'-Nova indulges most in multifarious word-play. That he must have been influenced by previous Azeri verse is obvious, though it is not easy to point to definite models. One Azeri poem, however, devoted to the theme of scarlet, might well have inspired a poem by Sayat'-Nova which could well be entitled, with reference to his beloved's embarrassing behaviour in public, 'Sayat'-Nova sees red.' The colour red has a special ambiguity in eastern literature. In the Bible the virtuous wife clothes her household with scarlet (*Proverbs*, 31,21); but the Whore of Babylon is 'arrayed in purple and scarlet colour' (*Revelation*, 17,4). Sayat'-Nova's beloved may dress in red silk (*al qumash*). But many Arab proverbs condemn this: 'The self-aggrandiser wears a red dress'; 'Laugh at the monkey with a red shoe'; 'His wool is red and his camel rubbed raw'; 'Shall I (be so rash as to) don a red robe?'.⁵³ An Azeri *gerayli* or poem composed of quatrains of octosyllabic verse by the 17th-century minstrel Ashîgh Abdullah (his exact dates are unknown) is famous enough to have survived in anthologies and, one feels, to have been heard by our Georgian-Armenian minstrel. It reads as follows:

*Bülbülâr qonub budagha
gül qîrmîzî geyinibdir.*

⁵³ 'ala-l-mukabbar thaub ahmar; idhak 'â-l-qird bi-kalkûl (P *gulgûn* 'rose-coloured') ahmar; suftuh hamrâ wa nâqtuh dabrâ; baddî alabbis hâlî jukhah hamrâ, op. cit. supra, nos. 2886, 292, 2587, 1158.

*Sevdiyim bashdan ayagha
al qürmüzi geyinibdir.*

*Äzäldän män gäldim sizä,
mayil oldum ala gözä;
yar qonaq gäläjäq bizä
yol qürmüzi geyinibdir.*

*Oyün, öyün, könül öyün,
sinämä chäkilib düyün,
sonalar chimäjäk bugün,
göl qürmüzi geyinibdir.*

*Hasha sevdiyim hasha,
dilläyänlär^b gäldi basha;
agh üzündä qosha qosha,
hal qürmüzi geyinibdir.*

*Jahan tökär qanlı yashın,
yandirdi baghrimin bashın,
chäkdin Abdulla'nın dishin,
dil qürmüzi geyinibdir.^a*

'Nightingales perch on the branch,
Dress in the crimson of the rose.
My beloved, from head to foot,
Dresses in scarlet and crimson.

From out of past eternity I have come to you.
I was bewitched by your speckled eyes.
My beloved will come to us as a guest.
She dons the crimson (dust) of the road.

Praise her, praise her, my heart, praise her!
Withdraw within my bosom, to beat (hard).
The beauties will be bathing today.
She dons the crimson of the lake (like the water-lily).

God forbid^c, my beloved, (that there be) envy!^c
Backbiters^d have appeared!
On her white face, two by two,
She puts on the crimson of her mole.

^a The text is taken from S. Sakaoğlu et al. (edd.), *Azərbaycan âşıqları və halk şairləri*, t. 2, İstanbul, 1986, p. 12, with amended orthography (the edition represents *Az â* by *e*, *q* by *g*, etc.). This work is marred by a large number of misprints, partly listed in the five pages of Errata, which do not include any in the present poem. The first word *Gülbüller* must obviously stand for *Bülbüller*. ^b Text *deyilenler*. ^c *hasha* may here be used in two senses: APTAz *hâshâ* 'God forbid!', and APT *khâsha*^h 'envy'. ^d Reading as from T *dillemek* 'touch with the tongue, censure, vilify', the text's *deyilenler*, be it from *dâyilmäk* 'be touched' or *deyilmäk* 'be said, be called', giving no sense.

The world sheds tears of blood.
 It makes the head of my liver burn.
 You have drawn Abdullah's tooth.
 She dresses in the crimson of my tongue!'

Sayat'-Nova's similar crimson or scarlet-orientated poem, composed of five quatrains of hendecasyllabic verse which he terms a *varsagh* (*vârsâqî*), and which by virtue of its multiple overtones might well qualify as a *tejnîs*, reads on p. 61 of the *Tetrak* as follows:

*Hamashay ashughlar ghay{i}bat'indaysan,
 o bad amalund(a)n yanugham yanugh.
 urshani gunashtur shohlay ay{i}dari(r)
 ô mah jamalundan yanugham yanugh.*

*Mah jamalun ôlmish ghêzêl varaghli
 alunda mêip'uri p'ênjan araghli
 gôrmadum san t'ak'i sarêsar aghli
 gizlin khi(y)alundan yanugham yanugh.*

*Ghadun neja ôkhshadêim ch'inara
 ch'un ch'inar ôdundur yankhalar nara
 naghshun dôndarubsan yozmin t'ê(y)ara
 dishin jilalundan yanugham yanugh.*

*Gôzal êshkhun bu sinami ghashubtur
 junun êt'mish aghêl bashtan ashubtur
 agh uzua no{o}ght'a nôght'a dushubtur,
 dôst sia khalundan yanugham yanugh.*

*K'ovul ghalkhmish nazlu yara varali
 sinam usta ghamzalarin sarali
 man sayat'nova am yardan yarali
 hamasha alindan yanugham yanugh.*

A literal translation of this would be:

You are constantly the subject of the minstrels' censure.
 On account of your bad behaviour I am burning, burning.
 The Sun is resplendent and spreads its light (widely, too).
 In that Moon-like beauty of yours I am burning, burning.

Your moon(-like) beauty is (surrounded) by a crimson leaf.
 In your hand (you hold) a wine-glass filled with araq.
 I have never seen anyone as (powdered) white as you.
 With scarlet dreams of you I am burning, burning.

Let me compare your stature with that of the platan-tree.
 Your fire burns (as red) as that of the platan when they set it on fire.
 You change your appearance a hundred thousand times.
 In the brilliance of your teeth I am burning, burning.

Beautiful one, love of you makes my breast faint.
 Being driven mad, (all) sense passes from my head.
 Over your white face (coloured?) points spread (?).
 Friend, from your black mole I am burning, burning.

My heart has risen up, embattled against the gracious beloved.
 Upon my breast your coquetteries (have brought) convulsions.
 I am Sayat'-Nova, wounded by his beloved.
 Through your scarlet-infidelities I am for ever burning, burning.

The combustion caused by the beloved's physical beauty is a commonplace in oriental literature generally (a Turkish hero bursts into flames and expires when his beloved undoes a button on her blouse), and in Sayat'-Nova in particular. *Me khoskēt vaṛ, k'ura k'ura* 'One word of yours burns, a furnace, a furnace', he exclaims in the 1758 Armenian ode *Modēt nēstoghēn gu harp'i* 'He who sits beside you becomes intoxicated',⁵⁴ a poem which (probably fortuitously, for he was no Greek scholar, though one cannot know what he may have read or been told in the royal library) echoes Sappho's famous ode 'He who sits opposite you seems to me equal to the gods', which describes the 'subtle fire that suddenly runs through the flesh.'⁵⁵ The genre has a long literary history: the charms of Glycera's *lasciva licentia* made Horace famously burn:

*urit me Glycerae nitor,
 splendentis Pario marmore purius,
 urit grata protervitas
 et vultus nimium lubricus aspici.*

(*Odes*, I.19)

'Glycera's beauty burns me up,
 Than Parian marble more bright and pure.
 Her graceful wantoness burns me up,
 And her countenance of great allure.'

In like manner Sayat'-Nova is burnt also by the whiteness of his beloved's face and teeth.

In the Near East it does not take much for a girl to attract censure. An anonymous 16th-century Azeri *āshiq* warns a contemporary Marilyn

*Sallana sallana gādān Salatīn,
 gāl bālā sallanma, göz dāyār sänä.*

⁵⁴ I fol. 69, H p. 56.

⁵⁵ Fr. 31, ed. D.A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*, LCL, 1982, vol. 1, p. 78. See below, Chapter Nine, pp. 366-368.

*Al yashîl geyinib qarshîda durma,
yayin bād nâzârdân, söz dâyar sâna.*⁵⁶

‘Swaying from side to side as you go, Salatyn,
Come, do not wiggle so, you will get the evil eye!
Do not affront them, dressing in scarlet and green.
Avoid their malicious look. They will call you words!’

It must be by some such flaunting of her natural beauty that Sayat’-Nova’s (imagined) mistress has become the talk of the town. He has described her countenance like that of the morning sun (*eresēt aŗvutvan ariv*) in *Modēt nēstoghēn*, and if she is like the Sun that spreads its light to all men, it is not basically her fault: but in the final verse in which the poet says he suffers from her scarlet, there might be a suggestion that others share too much of her favours; though for Sayat’-Nova to go so far as the Roman poet, to say that she is like Chloe, as free as the air, and as such enjoyed by all men, would be far more cutting than the usual style of oriental complaint. Eastern women are more guarded than their Western sisters, and no poet would waste his verses on any woman who behaved like the Lydias and Glyceras of Rome. On the other hand, she has caused offence, so that her moonlike beauty, which should be chaste and silver, is tinged with crimson. And she has been seen with a glass of intoxicating liquor in her hand. Since Hâfiz, this image is also a commonplace in Persian literature.

*Yâram chû qadah ba.dast gîrad
bâzâr butân shakast gîrad.
Har kas kih badîd chashm-i û guft
kû muhtasibî kih mast gîrad.*⁵⁷

‘When my beloved takes a wine-glass in her hand
The market for *belles-de-nuit* goes bankrupt.
Everyone who sees her (roving) eye, says
“Where is the constable, to arrest this drunk?”’

If Sayat’-Nova did not know this most famous ghazal of Hâfiz, soon to be adapted, in 1814, by his younger contemporary Goethe,⁵⁸ an admirer of the Persian poet (“*Was alle wollen, weisst du schon, Und hast es wohl verstanden,*” 1818), then he would have known nothing of Persian literature — and there is abundant evidence that he did. Hâfiz symbolises his beloved red wine as a lost and wanton maiden, Daughter of the

⁵⁶ S. Sakaoğlu, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 16, p. 52.

⁵⁸ In the gem-like *Über meines Liebchens Äugeln*, set to music by Schubert.

Grape (*Dukhtar-i Raz*), disturbing as a whirlwind, pungent, and rose-coloured; as one can be sure of Sayat^c-Nova, he is more than willing to take the errant creature back:

*Dukhtar-î shab, gard-i tund, talkh, gulrangast û mast
gar bayâbîdash ba-sû-i khâna^h-i Hâfiz barîd⁵⁹*

'A daughter of the night, a whirlwind, pungent, rose-coloured and drunk,
If you find her, bring her to Hâfiz's house!'

There is no doubt that Sayat^c-Nova's poem is addressed to a woman, though probably imaginary, of flesh and blood. But there is a suggestion that, like the red wine that is shameful for Muslims to drink, she has, in the eyes of the public, become something of a scarlet woman. As in the case of the innocent Salatin, it may not be entirely her fault. But her indiscretion prompts more than a suspicion that one may not be intended to interpret the *aghli* of st. 2 v. 3 as the accusative of APTaz 'âqil 'intelligent, wise', by which the verse would parallel the poet's Armenian ode beginning *Dun ên gëlkhên imastun* is 'You are basically intelligent.' The word, surely deliberately ambiguous, must be also Az *agh-li* (Äzizbây lists *aghliq* 'whiteness'), T *aklı* 'spotted or mixed with white' (*aklık* 'whiteness, white face-paint, innocence', Hony). The implication seems to be that the beloved has sought to cover up her blushes by an artificial application in the way of the Tiflis women as observed by Sir Robert Keir-Porter, to which he referred as 'painting, or rather enamelling'.⁶⁰ The poet means to contrast this her scarlet behaviour, as in the preceding striking floral image of her (silver) moonlight beauty surrounded by a crimson calyx (that this natural phenomenon is virtually universally, from Virgil to Armerindians, interpreted as a warning of storms⁶¹ seems very apt), with the Moon and the Sun of the first stanza. Her white or

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 49, p. 80.

⁶⁰ *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, etc., during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820*, London, 1821, vol. 1, pp. 120-121.

⁶¹ *At si virginem suffuderit ore ruborem / ventus erit: vento semper rubet aurea Phoebe*, Virgil, *Georgics*, I,430-1; *Lune rouge, le vent souffle; / Lune rousse, il pleut ou il souffle*, Bouches du Rhône proverb, cit. C. Swainson, *A handbook of weather folklore*, Edinburgh and London, 1873, p. 187; *When the fourth day around her orb is spread / A circling ring of deep and murky red, / Soon from his cave the God of Storms will rise, / Dashing with foaming waves the lowering skies / ... Then mark the various hues that paint her face, / And thus the fickle weather's chages trace*, J. Lamb, *Aratus*, cit. R. Inwards, *Weather Lore, a collection of proverbs, sayings, and rules concerning the weather*, London, 1893, p. 57; (similar observations by Francis Bacon and the Kuñi Indians, *ibid.*, pp. 56-8).

whitened face is referred to in st. 4 v. 5, but the verse is not grammatically or semantically straightforward, the verb, TAz *düşmek*, *düşmâq* having a variety of meanings, basically ‘fall’, but also ‘befall, befit, spread (of disease)’ (Äzizbây, Hony). *noqta-noqta*, AT *nuqta^h-nuqta^h* ‘all over dots or specks, each dot distinctly apart’ is an adverbial expression. The dots may be beauty-spots; the following verse refers to only one mole (*khal*), which is black, though it is possible that the others are of different colours; that in Abdullah’s poem is crimson, in line with his basic theme. In the version above, the phrase has been interpreted as ‘over your white face (coloured?) points spread.’ It is possible, however, to take *agh*, in TAz also, ‘whiteness’, as well as an adjective as a noun: so, ‘Whiteness comes to your face point by point’ (cf. AP *nuqta^h-ba-nuqta^h* ‘from point to point’, Steingass), which would be supported by the Modern Turkish idiom *ak düşmek* used with the dative of words for hair to mean ‘turn gradually white or grey’ (Steuerwald). The verse could therefore be interpreted in three different ways, none of which the arch-calembourist Sayat’-Nova would disclaim: (a) your blushes are going, the natural pallor (desirable in high-class ladies) is gradually returning to your countenance; (b) your blushes are being covered up in places by white paint applied to your face; (c) candour is returning to your face, you are becoming more honourable again (cf. T *yüzü ak* ‘his face is white’, ‘he has earned praise, may be proud of himself’, Redhouse). In any case, the beloved is no longer as *gulrang* in the face as Hâfiz’s gadabout: her face displays a certain candour, though whether this is more than skin-deep is left uncertain. The statement in st. 3 v. 3 that she changes her image or appearance a hundred thousand times hardly denotes constancy, though in a parallel Armenian ode of 1758 in which the poet defends his beloved (who may, at this date, well be real) against the illwill of her enemies, beginning *Yar, k’iz iski zaval ch’ëli, k’u dushmënin shař batz’aratz* ‘Beloved, may you never indeed suffer the harm, the evil the enemy utters’, similarly states that she changes her colour thirty times a day (*ôrën yarsun rang ku p’okhis*),⁶² perhaps in admiration. One feels that in the present Azeri poem, the statement is not meant to be flattering, but as an illustration of why she has fallen into disrepute: in any case, typically, it can be taken in two ways.

St. 3 v. 4 has caused difficulties owing to different readings. Arasli’s *dishin zavalindan* ‘from the harm of your tooth’, which would cast the

⁶² T p. 125, I fol. 64A, H p. 55, v. 10.

beloved in the unacceptable rôle of wild beast, can be rejected forthwith, since *zaval* is unsupported, *jilal* being firm. In the *Tetrak* script, however, շ *sh* and լ *l* are very similar (sufficiently to lead Arasli to misread the rhymes of vv. 13 and 14), and the Russian version of Vera Zvyaginseva, aided no doubt by her friend, the celebrated Armenian poet Avedis Isahakyan, reads 'by the pearls of your speech' (*zhemchugami recheï*),⁶³ which points to *dil*- 'tongue' rather than *dish*- 'tooth'. But the beauty of the beloved's teeth are a commonplace, almost a fetish, for Sayat'-Nova: in the Armenian *Patkirk'ët* they are 'ranged in the gold of her gums', in *Dastamazët* they are 'rubies and pearls', in *Yar*, *k'izi iski zaval ch'ëli* they are precious stones.⁶⁴ Here there is no allusion to the possible negative meaning of APTAz *jalâl* 'glory, magnificence, power' (Äzizbäy) as also 'pride, arrogance, rage' (Redhouse), as there might be if *dil*- 'tongue' were the correct reading. I read clearly *dish-in*.

St. 4 v. 4 proclaims that, against her pale skin, the beloved's black beauty spot burns her lover up. Sayat'-Nova's susceptibility in this regard is well attested. A similar red/black colour contrast is made in what is probably his most famous song, *Bëlbuli hid latz' is ëli* 'With the Nightingale you weep':

Hak'it zarën al is ari.
Bëlbuli hid lal is ari.
Bark êresit khal is ari,
*Khal is ari.*⁶⁵

'On the gold of your dress you have put scarlet.
 With the Nightingale you have made lamentation
 [*lal*, with a pun on APTAz *la'l* 'ruby'].
 On your rosy face you have placed a mole,
 Placed a mole.'

In the Azeri poem *Agêr nazlu yarun khali dêirsan* 'Should you speak of my gracious beloved's mole', he imagines her adorned, if that is the word, with 18, said respectively to have captured the whole world, Arrân, the ocean deep, Gümüşhane (famous for its silver mines), all that is forbidden and permitted, the main square of Tiflis, and, of course, Sayat'-Nova himself.⁶⁶ This is a light piece, hardly to be taken seriously.

⁶³ Gaysaryan, p. 229. It must be noted that she has missed the main point of the poem in translating the first verse as 'Not a few minstrels have sung about you' (*O tebe raspeval ne odin ashug*).

⁶⁴ H pp. 7, 34, 37.

⁶⁵ H pp. 8-9.

⁶⁶ T p. 50, H p. 139.

In the very earnest Armenian ode of 9th October 1758, however, *Yar*, *k'iz iski zaval ch'ëli*, mentioned above, the final *takhalluṣ* reads:

Irek' k'san u tasën khalën êresit bolork'ën shar a
*Vuntz'or Sayat'-Novu lizun yot'anasun baṛ batz'arats.*⁶⁷

'Three score and ten beauty-spots are in a series over the whole of your face,

Just as the tongue of Sayat'-Nova gives utterance to seventy words.'

An image that represents the beloved's face, however moon-shaped, as a spotted dick would in the West, and surely some places in the East, be held to exceed the bounds of hyperbole. Perhaps, and this could explain the several *noght'a* of the preceding line of the present Azeri poem, the poet is not referring to moles or patches of the size and colour affected by the courtesans of the court of Louis XIV or Regency England, but uses *khal* in the sense of 'speck, speckle, freckle' (Redhouse), which could be a small speck of gold or silver. In his Georgian song *Me shent'ana siqvaruli mak'vs* 'With you I have love',⁶⁸ the beloved is addressed as one having bathed herself to shine as gold (*ok'rod dagibania*), which hardly seems to refer to any natural complexion. In an Armenian ode of 1758, *Êshkhemet andanak êla* 'I have emerged from love without a knife [defenceless?]', the poet exclaims, in verses meant to be flattering,

Bark eresët kërak nëngats osku nëman jiranum ê ...
*Oske varaghov varaghnats surat' mak'aghat'ën dun is*⁶⁹

'Your bright face burns like gold fallen into fire ...

You are illuminated parchment gilded with gold leaf.'

The Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, visiting New Julfa in 1617, only a dozen years after its foundation, describes an Armenian bride as 'having her face completely gilded with gold leaf, with that kind of gold with which macaroons are gilt in our country, which is the strangest thing in the world'.⁷⁰ It must be to this cosmetic beauty that Sayat'-Nova refers

⁶⁷ St. 5 vv. 3-4, H p. 55. *Irek' k'san u tasën* = G *samotz'daat*'. See Addenda, p. 455.

⁶⁸ B p. 61.

⁶⁹ St. 2, vv. 2, 4. T p. 126, H p. 54.

⁷⁰ 'E'l viso tutto indorato a fogliami, con quella sorte de oro con che s'indorano fra di noi i mostacciuoli', *I viaggi di Petro della Valle*, Rome, 1972, vol. 1, p. 440. Also Chardin, in 1672: 'Nature has given most of the women such graces as are nowhere else to be seen, and it is impossible to behold without loving them. They are tall, easy, not encumbered with fat, and have slender waists; but they injure their beauty with paint' (*Travels through Mingrelia and Georgia into Persia*, in *A new collection of voyages*,

with such apparent approval. But the *khal* or mole for which the lover burns has an ambiguous usage in the languages from which Sayat'-Nova borrowed it: i.a. 'the centre of divine unity; a spot of disobedience or perversity in an otherwise spotless character; a point of good in an otherwise bad character' (Redhouse); 'irksomeness, wearisome importunity; pride, haughtiness' (Steingass). There is enough there, if found in the beloved, to make a lover burn. A black spot against a white background can spoil as easily as enhance; against the scarlet background drawn by the poet, a spot 'as black as hell, as dark as night' might well conjure up images of a place renowned for carbonised souls writhing on a carpet of flames.

Whether he had this ambiguity in mind with respect to the mole or not, the poet clearly uses the image of the platan tree (*ch'inar*) in two distinct ways in stanza 3. In verse 1 the beloved's stature is compared with the tree, a commonplace in oriental poetry. In Sayat'-Nova the tree is used to symbolise the refreshing coolness of the beloved: *Ashkharis shēvak' is anum, salb u ch'inar is, goveli* 'You give shade to the world, you are cypress and platan, praiseworthy one'.⁷¹ Less commonly used with respect to the beloved is the corollary in verse 2 that when the platan is burned, it gives out a bright, and hot, flame. The *ch'inar* or platan is one of the definitions (e.g. by D. Ch'ubinashvili) of Georgian *alva*, with which Sayat'-Nova compares the beloved in his Georgian poem *Samot'khidan gamosuli vardi khar* 'You are a Rose out of Paradise': *tanadobit' alva ganazardi khar* 'In your stateliness you are a nurtured platan'. Since *alva* also means 'to burn, a burning', an obvious pun presents itself to the Georgians, already in Rust'aveli's *Man in the Panther Skin* (ca. A.D. 1200): *Vigonebdi, tz'etz'khli up'ro medeboda gulsa alvad. / ch'emni stsorni tsavitanen, ch'emsa davje, mt'k'vian alvad* 'I thought on her, fire burned in my heart into a larger flame (*alva*). / I took my comrades with me, I sat down, they called me a platan (*alva*)'.⁷² *alva* was burned for its perfume: *Dghe da ghame mujamrit'a*

J. Knox: London, 1767, vol. VI, p. 370). Their contemporary, the missionary Don Christoforo Castelli, who drew the portraits of many Georgian and Mingrelian women, in particular that of T'eimurazi I's queen T'amara ('pulcherissima inter cunctas humanas creaturas') whose further name Vardisp'era ('Rose-face') suggests a natural complexion (pl. 50), makes no such complaint. He notes that eyes (*orechi* 'ears' must be a mistake for *occhi*) and black hair were highly prized (pl. 52).

⁷¹ *Diba u engidunia*, st. 4 v. 4, T p. 106, H p. 17.

⁷² *Vep'khistaosani*, st. 369, edd. T'. Shavishvili et al., T'bilisi, 1953, p. 85, edd. I. Abashidze et al. [a magnificent illuminated 800-year commemorative volume], T'bilisi, 1966, st. 362, p. 70, tr. M.S. Wardrop, London, 1912, st. 357, p. 58.

ekmeodis alva t'lili 'Day and night cut *alva* poured forth (its perfume) from censers'.⁷³ The *alva* is otherwise translated (as its form suggests) as 'aloes',⁷⁴ a bitter plant more suitable as an incense, and that with which Steingass associates the APT *mijmar* 'censer for incense' (*mujmar* 'incense, aloes wood') borrowed by the Georgian *mujamari* just quoted. In his Azeri poem Sayat'-Nova will be referring to the heat engendered in himself, for whatever effect she might have upon her admirers, the oriental beauty was not supposed herself to burn with a passion like that of her more emancipated Western sister Sappho, through whose flesh a swift fire ran. That, however, seems to be the clear indication of Sayat'-Nova, which suggests that his statement in st. 2 v. 4 imputes unladylike thoughts to the beloved herself: *gizlin khi(y)alundan* can be interpreted both as '(I am burning) from secret dreams of you', or 'from your secret dreams (which make a lover jealous)'.

St. 5 v. 1 presents difficulties both of basic translation and possible ambiguity. Has the poet's heart risen in hope, revolt, self-defence, or gone up in flames? All depends on the meaning of *varali*, the clearest connection of which would be, as rendered above, with PT *bâra*^h 'wall, tower, rampart, castle' (Redhouse), cf. P *bâr* i.a. 'foundation, fortification, wall' as in *bâr û dîwâr* 'walls and bulwarks' (Steingass), possibly, with lengthened vowel, equivalent to Pahlavi *war* 'shelter, enclosure' (MacKenzie), from which perhaps Az *vâr* 'stratum, layer, strip (of land, iron)', Äzizbây. A *svarabhakti* form Az **vârâli* for **vârli* (*varli* 'rich, propertied' exists, but makes no sense here), might be possible. It is probably in such a sense that Sayat'-Nova uses *var* in *T'e vur k'aghak' tigh handipis ku k'andis, var ch'is ani*⁷⁵ 'If you encounter a city, you will destroy it, you will not make a wall'. The manner in which others interpret this latter phrase clearly illustrates how one of Sayat'-Nova's words, probably in this case not even meant to be ambiguous, is given a variety of meanings by his fellow Armenians: for Hasrat'yan interprets it as TAz *var* 'possessions, riches', and H. T'umanyan, interestingly in our present context, as *var* 'burning', though in the positive sense of 'shining, splendid' ('you will not make

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Shavishvili, st. 330, p. 76, Abashidze, st. 323, p. 64, Wardrop, 319, p. 52 (where *alva* is translated as 'aloes').

⁷⁴ '1. Aloe; 2. v. *alvis-khe*'; *alvis-khe* ['alva-tree'] 'poplar (*Populus pyramidalis*),' Tsch. 'Alva is variously translated poplar, plane-tree, cypress, aloe; the last interpretation has generally been adopted in this version', Wardrop, p. 14, n. 2 to st. 77.

⁷⁵ *Shat sirun* is, couplet 2, v. 4, T p. 102, H p. 10.

it glorious').⁷⁶ In his Armenian verse Sayat'-Nova is careful not to rhyme words with *r* with those with *ř* (I have found only one exception),⁷⁷ but this is irrelevant when it is a matter of Armenian puns within Azeri, which knows only one phonemic *r*. Thus the poet, like T'umanyan, might well have been thinking of *vař* 'burning' as a component of his Azeri *varali*, since it so well fits the context. While Arm. *vař*, as in *zrahavar* 'armed with a cuirass', *vař-em* 'arm, equip, attire', *vař-im* 'arm oneself, take up arms, equip oneself', is anyway probably a loan from Iranian cognate with PT *bâra*^h, Phl *war*, Az *vâr*, and so a legitimate contender for a rôle in the conundrum. The puns here may well be inherent in the etymology.⁷⁸ Arm *vař* as 'burning in love' is not rare in Sayat'-Nova: *ch'ë ka k'iz pes êshkhi junun, kêrak nêngats vař is êli* 'There is none like you so mad from love, fallen into (its) fire you are aflame'.⁷⁹

Is the poet's heart risen 'embattled' in defence of or in defence against the beloved? Bold though it may seem — a boldness hedged by a saving ambiguity — it is the latter that is suggested by the following verse, which complains that the beloved's *ghämzälär* (APTaz *ghamza*^h,

⁷⁶ Hasrat'yan, n. to Arm. no. 4, p. 314; T'umanyan, [Collected Works], t. IV, Erevan, 1954, p. 324.

⁷⁷ *ařav/tarav/arav* in *Astudz khial aritz*, st. 7, Hasrat'yan, p. 85. *par* is no exception in *yar/p'ar/susanbar*, in *Ashkharumës akh ch'im k'ashi*, st. 5, H p. 37, since it is not Arm. *p'ar* 'glory' but P *farr* (though this, of course, is cognate with the Iranian from which the Arm. word was borrowed). An example of the poet's meticulous care with respect to rhymes with *ř* is to be seen in *khabar/char/yar* in *Dastamazët*, st. 4, T p. 117, H p. 34, and with respect to *ř* in *shař/tsař/chař/paytsař/patchař/vař/jař/bař*, sts. 1-5, carefully distinguished from *dêzhar/k'ar/shar* of st. 5, in *Yar k'iz iski zaval ch'ëli*, T p. 125, I fol. 64, H p. 55.

⁷⁸ The Iranian words (and indirectly the *vara-* of Sayat'-Nova's Azeri poem, thus corroborating the interpretation above) are connected with Skr *vāra*ti 'encloses', NHG *Wehr* 'defence', E *war*, *weir*, Latin **vero* 'door' as in Umbrian *vero-fe* 'at the door', Old Russian *vora* 'fencing' (cf. Kluge/Mitzka, *Etym. Wb. d. deutschen Spr.*, Berlin, 1967, p. 844; the Iranian forms are not there quoted). Pokorny (*Indo-germanisches etym. Wb.*, Bern, 1959, p. 1166) derives Arm. *vař-em* directly from IE 12. *wer* 'burn, blacken', cf. E *war-m* etc.; one must then ask why this root did not give **geř*, which in any case would derive from an extended root **wer-s*, not otherwise attested. *vař-em* 'equip' and *vař-em* 'burn' could be from one and the same root: *vař* 'burning' has also the meanings 'splendour, banner, royal mantle, gold brocade', which come close to the meaning 'equipped' of (*zraha*)*vař*, *vařem* 'equip', which could itself easily develop into a sense of 'equipment for defence' as in Phl *war*, P *bâr(a*^h) 'defensive wall', 'fortification'. The tempting duality of German *Brand* 'fire; sword' (borrowed in the latter meaning by Italian *brando*) is to be resisted, an intermediary 'fire-brand' being surely responsible for the semantic development.

⁷⁹ *Khoskirët malum im ari*, st. 5 v. 4, T p. 109, H p. 25.

qāmzā, ‘a wink or signal with the eye, an amorous glance, coquetry, ogling’, Goethe’s *Äugeln* (cf. P *ghamza^hzan* “striking winks”, ‘casting amorous glances’, Steingass) upon his breast are *sarali*, which cannot be other than APT *sar‘a-li*, *sarali* ‘subject to epileptic fits’ (Hony). Hasrat‘yan’s rendering *t‘unavur* ‘poisonous’⁸⁰ may allude to T *zehirli*, but without foundation. Zvyaginskaya’s ‘you nailed me to a dungeon’ (*prigvozdila menya ti k temnitse*)⁸¹ seems to suggest T *sarayli* ‘palace servant or slave’ (Hony), which is not phonetically or contextually satisfactory, probably *rhythmi gratia*.

St. 5 v. 3 contains the pun most dear to Persian and Turkish hearts: *yâr* ‘beloved’, *yârlı* ‘having a beloved’, *yâra^h* ‘wound’, *yâra^hlı* ‘wounded’ (P *yâra^h* ‘bracelet, necklace; laxative medical compound’, T *yâra* ‘efficacy of help or action’ are further possibilities not here involved), but is quite straightforward, a rarity in this poem. Its clarity is more than compensated by the multiple overtones of the final verse of the poem, in which the poet complains that he is constantly burning from the *al* of the beloved. One can probably discount Az *âl* ‘hand’ on the grounds that where this is clearly meant, in st. 2 v. 2, the second person possessive pronoun is written as *-un*, not *-in* as here, which ought to show that the poet intended to make a distinction: though the fact that there *-in* would be more in keeping with Turkic vocalic harmony causes one to wonder whether the Armenian poet is playing fast and loose with Azeri phonetics in order to increase the mystification, especially since in the verse now under consideration the most obvious interpretation of *al-* is PTaz *âl*, for which the required possessive is rather *-un* denoting a back vowel than the *-in* we have. PTaz *âl* ‘red, reddish yellow’ is frequently and unambiguously used by Sayat‘Nova in his Armenian poems, e.g. *al qumashēn* ‘red silk’.⁸² In Georgian *al-i* is specifically used as ‘flame, flame of passion’, the verb *al-va* ‘to burn’, as mentioned above, being used as ‘to burn with love’. The Georgian lover, like the hero of *The Man in the Panther Skin*, suffers and burns from afar,⁸³ which is not the case with Sayat‘Nova, who complains of the flame (*ali*) he suffers in a Georgian poem, *Vitsvi eshkhisagan, ali ara mak‘vs?* ‘I burn with love, have I not fire?’⁸⁴

⁸⁰ P. 149.

⁸¹ Gaysaryan, p. 229.

⁸² *Is kanch‘um im lalanin*, st. 2, v. 1, T p. 139, H p. 21.

⁸³ *shorit‘ alva*, ed. Shavishvili, st. 27, p. 8, Abashidze, st. 27, p. 13, Wardrop, st. 12, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Samot‘khidan gamosuli vardi khar*, st. 5, v. 1, B p. 66 (who omits the surely necessary question mark, though there is no interrogative particle (*-a*) in the text).

He and his Georgian listeners might have thought also of Georgian *ala* 'a spot on the moon' (modified meaning of PT *hâla*⁸⁵ 'halo round the moon'?) prompted by the image in st. 2 v. 1 (above, n. 61). In its sense of scarlet, *âl* refers to all that is red about the poet's beloved, her lips, her cheeks, her dress — and also to her blushes (cf. T *ali al moru mor* "his red red, his purple purple", 'red in the face from exertion and confusion', Hony). A further allusion may be to APT *âl* 'offspring, family, house, race, dynasty' (Steingass), 'the followers of a man of importance, consisting of his family, relatives, friends and followers, and of his posterity' (Redhouse), in which case the verse could also refer to trouble a lover might have with the beloved's family. Although the present Azeri poem seems too light-hearted to be taken seriously, the poet had known such difficulties, as witnessed by the Armenian and Georgian poems in which he refers to the difference in social status between himself and his beloved: *Bedaslin vur khosetz'ënis* 'The lowly-born whom you cause to speak'⁸⁵; *Sop'elsa da sop'elsa shua mt'as amboben* 'They say there is a mountain between one world and another';⁸⁶ *Shen sakhelmtsip'o gvirgino, ch'emi t'avi arashia* 'O you imperial throne, my self is in a void (*lit.* my head is in nothingness)'.⁸⁷ The severest criticism is implied, however, if one interprets *al* as PT *âl* 'fraud, deceit, treachery' (Redhouse). Other poems complain of the beloved's inconstancy, e.g. the Armenian *varsaq* in which the poet complains

Khilk'ës tarav, jadu'arin ch'im tesi.
Bemurvat'in, beighrarin ch'im tesi.
Sayat'Nova asatz', Yarin ch'im tesi.
*Man im gali artasunk'ës husalov.*⁸⁸

'She has robbed me of my wits, I shall not see the enchantress.
 The merciless, inconstant one I shall not see.
 Sayat'-Nova has said, "I shall not see the beloved.
 I wander about, shedding my tears."'

But that is said in a traditional *plainte*, as light-hearted as, one feels, the present Azeri poem, in which, if *al* is so interpreted, the poet would have joined the ranks of the beloved's minstrel critics. When things are really serious, as one can be sure they were in his final years at the Georgian

⁸⁵ 1759, T p. 136, I fol. 67, H p. 61.

⁸⁶ I fol. 6, B p. 27, st. 1, v. 1.

⁸⁷ In *Gana me mshieri viqav* 'Was I hungry?', st. 2, v. 1, fol. 5, B p. 51.

⁸⁸ *Shat mart' k'ose, is yarimen hasrat' im* 'Many say I yearn for a beloved', st. 5, vv. 1-4, T p. 114, I fol. 58A, H p. 32.

court, when in an important 1758 ode he complains of an Armenian sister of Barbara Allen:

Êshkhemen hivand pāketz'a, ach'kēs chanaparhin mēnatz'.

Ip' miṛa, izhum tis ekav, nazēn beighrarin mēnatz'.

'I lay sick of love, my eyes were fixed on the road.

When I died, then she came to see. The inconstant one retained all her grace.'

He cannot bring himself to wish her harm:

*Ashughi lizun bēlbul ē, ôrhnanek' une, nalat' ch'ē ka*⁸⁹

'The minstrel's tongue is a Nightingale: it bears a blessing, it knows no curse.'

Whatever his listeners might have made of it, it is doubtful that Sayat'-Nova would have wished to conjure up the Georgian *al-i*, 'wicked fairy, nymph, dryad', *al-k'aj-i* 'evil spirit, devil, witch' (Tschenkeli). This owes its name ultimately to the colour of blood, deriving from P *âl* in the sense of 'fatal disorder to which women are liable until the seventh day after their confinement' (Steingass), thus a post-puerperal fever. This is personified in particular as Armenian *al*, *al-k'* 'a female evil spirit, enemy of parturient women and the newly born and children', imaginatively further developed as 'glutton', and used in expressions such as *alk'i kokhats* 'trampled by the Alk', *alk'i p'okhats* 'transformed by the Alk' to denote 'a very sickly, thin, ugly child' (Malkhasyantz'). That, decidedly, would be going too far: for Sayat'-Nova, and perhaps for us critics, too.

Any translation of Sayat'-Nova's allegorical verse is bound to miss half at least of the double-entendres, which are non-transferable from one language to another. To achieve any consistency, a translator is forced to choose between one meaning and another. In her skilled rendering of the Azeri poem we have been discussing, a Russian version which preserves the octasyllabic metre and, aided by the rich resources of the Russian language in this regard, the compound rhyme-scheme of the original, Vera Zyaginskaya, a poet in her own right — much of her own verse is devoted to Armenian themes, and she benefitted from her friendship with the renowned poet Avedis Isahakyan⁹⁰ — produces a fine

⁸⁹ *Êndur ach'kēs ch'ē tz'amak'um, sirtēs mech'ēn arin mēnatz'* 'Since my eye drieth not, the blood remains (clotted) in my heart', st. 1 vv. 3-3, st. 5, v. 1, T p. 128, H p. 49. Bryusov's Russian version, *apud* Gaysaryan, pp. 84-85, is full of fire and passion and rhythm, but inexact.

⁹⁰ See O.T. Ganalanyan, *Armeniya v tvorchestve russkikh poëtov*, Izdatel'stvo Ayastan: Erevan, 1972, pp. 103-115.

Russian poem worthy to stand beside the recreations of Valeri Bryusov and Sergei Shervinski. But she has opted for a straightforward rendering that makes the poem appear to be a traditional love-song in praise of the beloved's positive qualities, beginning with an over-innocent rendering of the first verse as 'Many minstrels have sung about you', and ending with a lame mistranslation of the final verse, 'If I am not yours, I am nobody's'. It is possible to produce an English version that does the exact opposite, i.e. rendering the double-entendres only in their negative connotations, critical of the beloved. In that which follows, while retaining the rhyme-scheme of the original, Sayat'-Nova's hendecasyllabic Azeri verse has been replaced by more English iambic hexameters:

Hämishä ashughlar qeybätindäsän

Those who sing of love rehearse their slanders daily,
Behind your back. Your public shame, that burns me up!
Bright as the sun you are, which shines for all men, too!
Moon beauty, your nocturnal fame! That burns me up!

The once chaste silver moon takes on a reddish glow.
From your brimful cup red wine and araq flow.
Cleverly you paint your face as white as snow.
Secret thoughts your dreams inflame! That burns me up!

Like the cypress-tree you stand, tall, upright.
It, too, flares bright and red, when set alight.
With a thousand different personas you deceive men's sight!
Your white teeth flash, draw blood, and maim. That burns me up!

My love for you compels my fainting heart to race.
My lovesick wits are addled, quit my head apace.
An innocent candour, of course, masks your moonlike face.
Your coal-black mole that strikes me lame! That burns me up!

My wounded heart leaps up and arms itself, in vain!
Your amorous glances sear my bosom. Ah, the pain!
I am Sayat'-Nová, by his beloved cruelly slain.
That scarlet double game of yours! *That* burns me up!

A punster must take care that he does not become, despite himself, a sorcerer's apprentice conjuring up forces he cannot control. For words, released from a tight context, can take on lives of their own. The smallest ones can swell, genie-like, to enormous size. Sayat'-Nova's *al* has as near parallel the Greek syllable *hal-* upon which Homer rings many a change. When Iris descends to the sea-bed to visit Achilles' mother

Thetis (falling incidentally like a plumb-bob attached to a bull's horn (*κέρας*) to weight a line that would bring Death (*κῆρ*) to the fish, she finds herself surrounded by salt-water goddesses (*ἄλλαι*), and hopes that her message from Zeus will not be in vain (*ἄλιον*). That the Greeks were a maritime nation, and Homer is supposed by some to have recited his epics at Smyrna on the Anatolian coast, may explain what appears to be an obsession with the root of *ἄλιας*, viz. *ἄλς* 'salt, the sea', as befits the use of *ἄλεις* "salts" as 'Attic salt' or 'wit', and its homophones: e.g. *εἰς ἄλς ἄλτο* 'he leapt into the sea' (*Iliad*, 1,532). An example of puns in Greek on Sayat'-Nova's syllable *al* is found in *καὶ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλῆιον οἶος ἄλτο ... πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων* 'he wandered (*alâto*) over the land of Alê ("wandering", Lycia or Cilicia) ... the path of fugitive (*ἀλεείνων*) men', *Iliad*, 6,201). Liddell or Scott (1883) points to a play on *ἄλτο* 'wandered' and *ἀλεείνων* 'wandering' and 'hot' from *ἄλη* 'heat', but *ἄλη* 'escape' plays also a rôle; while a further connection of Alê, already ambiguous as the name of country and 'wandering', with *ἄλῆος* 'without cornlands, poor in land' makes the term *double-entendre* even more inadequate.

Nowadays the pun vies with sarcasm for the title of lowest form of wit. It was not ever so. Moses shows God to be more of a punster than an etymologist in his explanation of *Bâbel* (God's Gate) from Hebr. *bâlal* 'he confused' (*Gen.* 11,9). The greatest English bard was a 'tickle-brain', the bawdiest master of the double-meaning in English literature, reserving his most obscene pun for his most tenderly sentimental play *Romeo and Juliet*; Dr. Johnson was of the opinion that 'the quibble was for him the fatal Cleopatra for whom he lost the world', though when he came to lose it is unclear. The more serious Milton could descend to one of the worst puns in the English language, depicting Elijah's ravens as 'though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought' (*Paradise Regained*, 2,269). There is clearly no call to blush for one in the company of Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Almighty.

In discussions with native Armenian speakers, the present writer has encountered a reluctance to believe, perhaps because it was felt to be somehow irreverent, that Sayat'-Nova meant more than one thing by a word, and that despite his designation of many of his poems as *t'ejnis*. Not every critic of Shakespeare has the clearsightedness for which Dr. Johnson is renowned, and Empson is right to criticise the Arden editor of the Bard's works for asserting that by *rooky* he meant only one

of the six things other critics had thought of⁹¹ and that in the case of a poet whose Clown had said, 'To see this age! A sentence is but a cheveril [chamois leather] glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turn'd outward'.⁹² It is, of course, difficult to know in the case of the multiple meanings one may detect in Sayat'-Nova's verse how many the poet actually intended, but that we can see many, if any, more than he, is improbable. Critics must beware of letting it appear that they are possessed of intelligence and sensibility superior to that of their often maligned subjects. In the case of Sayat'-Nova, the ability to construct intricate metrical schemes in five languages may not denote profound wisdom, but it is nothing if not clever. Shakespeare knew what he was about when it came to ambiguity, and so did Sayat'-Nova. As an example of the most extreme (no. 7) of the types of ambiguity listed by Empson, i.e. a word that means one thing and its opposite,⁹³ one may quote Sayat'-Nova's Georgian verse

*Hindis qalamk'ars davedzeb zar u zarbab zarist'vis*⁹⁴

'I shall seek in the Indian pen-box gold (*zar*) and brocade (*zar-bab*) for *zar*.'

The most obvious meaning of the final *zar* is P *zar* 'gold'. But the poet has already used *zar* in this sense twice in the same verse (*zar*,

⁹¹ W. Empson, *Seven types of ambiguity*, 2nd ed., Pelican Books: London, 1973, p. 105. *Iausengier* is an example, see p. 136 and Addenda, pp. 453-4.

⁹² *Twelfth Night*, III.1.

⁹³ A so-called example of this which Empson (p. 227) takes from Sigmund Freud (*Notebooks*, vol. IV, no. 10, *cit. ibid.*) will not hold water: 'the early Egyptians, apparently, wrote the same sign for 'young' and 'old', showing which was meant by an additional hieroglyph, not to be pronounced, which may have taken the place of gesture in conversation'. One should perhaps seek to know from which particular *œuvre de vulgarisation* this information came before dismissing it as nonsense, but the usual Ancient Egyptian words for 'young' (*renpt*, *nḥn*, *ḥmn* 'be young', *nḥnt* 'youth', *nnt*, *šr* (Coptic *šēre*) 'child', *msw* 'children', all with the determinative 'child') and 'old' (*ik* 'be old', *iʿw*, *tni* 'old man', with the determinative 'old man with stick', *iswt* 'olden times', with the determinative 'herb' ('dried herb'?), listed in A. Gardener, *Egyptian grammar*, OUP: London, 1966, section A, would call for a philologist of the adventurous school to reconcile: in any case, one does not know how Ancient Egyptian was vocalised, and the difference that can make is demonstrated by Chinese *yang* 'male' and *ying* 'female'. Better examples of words with opposite meanings (deriving from divergent developments from the same root) are Arm. *parapim* 'to be busy, to take repose' (Bedrossian), cf. French *vaquer* (*à ses occupations*) 'attend to' and 'rest vacant', the same development as in Greek *σχολάζω* 'have leisure, have nothing to do' and 'devote one's time to a thing, attend lectures' (on *σχολή* 'leisure' and 'that in which leisure is employed, disputation, a school').

⁹⁴ *Arvis uari ar ut'kvams* 'No-one says No to a friend', st. 1, v. 4, B p. 37.

zarbab). One is surely invited to think of P *zâr* 'groan, lamentation, weeping', borrowed in Georgian *zar-i* as 'terror, lamentation' (Tschenkeli). Shall I, the poet asks, now seek in this precious Indian box rich gifts, only to find, along with the rejection complained of in verse 1, cause for lamentation? The possibilities are still not exhausted. PT *zâr*, G *zar-i* can also mean 'die' (sg. of 'dice'), and verse 3 of the second stanza will encourage the lady to 'up and play in the gold and silver bowl',⁹⁵ perhaps in connection with the 'golden button' that he has sought but not acquired,⁹⁶ itself probably meaning more than it appears on the surface to mean. One can be sure only that the poet did not intend an allusion to Georgian (K'art'li dialect) *zar-i* 'barn for maize on four poles' (Tschenkeli).

Another form of wordplay inspired by Azeri forms is what the annotations call *qaraheja* and *alip'lama* 'alphabetical' *qaraheja*.⁹⁷ TAz *qara* 'black' here refers to writing (in black ink). APT *hijâ* means '(innocently) spelling out one's words' (not necessarily with satirical intent), and thence 'satire, bitter words, reproach' (Redhouse, Steingass), thus clearly a genre that would appeal directly to a punster like Sayat'-Nova. This sort of spelling game is ancient and widespread: the riddles in the 10th-century Old English Exeter Book use runes as clues to puzzles. Sayat'-Nova similarly uses groups of letters as cryptogrammes (*Lalanin*, *SN*, etc.), and indulges in alphabetical *qaraheja* in his three main languages. His complete poems in this genre are not satirical, but serious, even religious, the main ones being composed in Azeri, although, it must be said, he was clearly far from qualified to undertake such a highly literate exercise, since he demonstrates a lack of mastery of written Turkish and Persian, imagining, for example, that APT *dhâlim* ظالم begins with a non-emphatic *dh*. Educated in Georgian at Sanahin, his

⁹⁵ *Ade, k'alo, it'amashe ok'ros simis langarshia.*

⁹⁶ *shent'vis ok'ros ghils davedzeb, vera vshovob zargarshia* 'For you I seek the golden button, I do not find it at the goldsmith's (P *zarkâr*, not listed as a loan in Ch'ubinashvili, Meckelein, or Tschenkeli). Cf. pp. 306-7.

⁹⁷ *somkhuri qarahija* 'Armenian q.' re *Mta êshkhi k'uren* 'I fell into the furnace of love', I fol. 58, H p. 66; *ese simghere alip'lama qaraheja diakh kargi aris arut'inas nat'k'omi vintz' istsavlos shendoba b(r)dznas daitsera martis D k'ro. UMG* 'This song is an alphabetical *qaraheja*; it is very good; whoever would learn it should say a '(Lord have) mercy'; it was written on 4th March 443 of the chronicon' [A.D. 1755], annotation to *Alip' alahi Bêi banda* 'A Allah's B slave', *Tetrak*, p. 101, H p. 219. Ioane's annotation, fol. 60, to the Armenian *Aib Astvadz siris* calls it a *qaraheja* preceded by an epithet which is difficult to read, and may be a shot at *alip'lama*; it does not read the expected Georgian *anbanuri* 'alphabetical', though H p. 67, translates it as Armenian *aybbenakan* 'alphabetical'.

knowledge of Azeri and Persian was purely auditory, as was also his dialectal Armenian, which he preferred to write in Georgian script, while his Classical Armenian was faulty, witness his macaronic *Eulogy of St. John the Baptist*.⁹⁸ Sayat'-Nova's poems in this form have no aesthetic value, and one wonders why he indulged in them. For all his admiration of Ancient Greece, no-one expected Keats to write in dactylo-epitritics, while those of the learned scholars of his day who could are not wellknown to posterity. Perhaps Sayat'-Nova, following the practice of Azeri minstrels, felt it was expected of him. The technique doubtless calls for some ingenuity, but one cannot agree with the annotation in the *Tetrak* that his performance in this respect was '(very) good'.⁹⁹ His most ambitious Azeri poem is one of mystic intent addressed to *Sha(h)khat'ay* 'Emperor of Cathay':

Dêdilar k'i Sha(h)khat'ay KHÊI, ALIP', RÊI, ALIP', BÊI.
Ustad neja bash ch'(ê)khara ÊI, ALIP', BÊI, ALIP', BÊI.
ALIP' Alah, BÊI bayian êt'ti, T'ÊI takhtini.
SHAH shahay, SÊI sovad, JIMU jumla, HÊI hagh verdi har gaha.
KHÊI khialum, TAL talda dur, ZAL zalumlar yaradan.
RÊI rahunda ruum ghaim, ZÊI ziarat' dargaha.
SIN sap'a, SHINI shuk'ur, SAT' sêhardan ghêl hagma.
ZAT' zarap' ôl, TÊI t'ani gil ch'ak sôzoyi k'argaha.
ZÊI zulumat', AYIN nagalat', GHAYIN ghudêrat' madanun.
P'ÊI p'ir ustad dova ghêlar, GHAP' ghudêrat' madana.
K'AP', ALIP', LAM, ALI(P'), MIN, saiad vov u non on dur.
*LAM, ALIP', LA(M), YÊI yarandi, gham ch'ak'ma, sayiad nova.*¹⁰⁰

With regard to metre and rhyme, this poem is a mess. Verses 5, 6, 8 - 12 can be read as with the regular 8 + 7 syllables; to scan verses 5 and 11 is impossible, and what rhymes there are are unworthy of the careful craftsman that Sayat'-Nova was. Though tempting one to wonder why this poem has a place of honour in the initial pages of the *Tetrak*, it merits, if by that fact alone, an attempt at a translation, which might read as follows:

They said, Shahkhat'ay, *Kh A R A B* [*kharâb*^a 'ruination'].

⁹⁸ *Et'ur gilan s(ur)b Karapit*, T pp. 9-10, I fol. 57A, tr. H pp. 80-81.

⁹⁹ *kargi* 'good', re *Hamasha ashughlar qahri*, T p. 87 (see below, p. 345 n. 105); *diakh kargi* 'very good', re *Alip' alahi sevarsan*, T p. 101 (see below, p. 341 n. 104).

¹⁰⁰ T pp. 3-4.

^a There is only one *alif* in the APT form of this word, though it is listed with two long *a*'s in Azeri (*kharab*, *Äzizbây*, not **khârab*; cf. *zaval*, p. 170); SN as usual reproduces the Azeri pronunciation rather than Arabic orthography, hardly a proper procedure in this alphabetic genre.

A master, in what language shall he understand *Y A B A B* [*Yâ Bâb* ‘O Gate’]?^b

A is for *Allâh*, *B* for *Bayân* [he has explained], *T*^c for *Takhti* [his Throne]. *Sh*^e for *Shâhâ* [O King], *S* for *Saudâ* [Trade]^d, *J* for *Jumla* [the Whole], *H* for *Haqq* [Justice] he has given to every place.

Kh for *Khâyâlîm* [my Dream], *D* is *Da‘al-da* [in Deception]^e, *Z* for *Zalum-lar* [Cruel ones]^f creating.

R for *Râhunda Rûyum* [on your Road my Face]^g may I direct, *Z* for *Ziyârat* [a Visit] to the Court.

S for *Şafâ* (Delight)^h, *Sh* for *Shükür* [Thanks], *Ş* for *Sâhradan* [from the Desert]ⁱ the voice of God (?).^j

Z for *Zurâf ol* [be Clever]^k, *T* for *Tanî* [Know],^l come, take your word^m to the workshop.

^b TAz *nece, nâjâ*; Az *bash chikharmaq = bash tapmaq* ‘understand’ (Äzizbây; T *bash chiqârmaq* is defined by Redhouse as ‘to bring to a successful issue’). The question must be how to understand APT *bâb*, basically ‘gate, door’, but also figuratively ‘repentance’, used by mystics in the sense of ‘chief saint’, and in onomancy in the term *bâb-i kabîr* ‘great gate’, i.e. ‘the ordinary alphabet of 29 letters’ (R).

^c The proper name of this letter is of course *shîn*, not *shah*, which is rather the name of the Armenian character *sh*.

^d PT *saudâ* ‘trade’ seems preferable to APT *saudâ* ‘blackness’, though elsewhere SN is reluctant to connect the Almighty with commerce.

^e The letter is called *Tal*, but the name of the Arabic letter, *dâl*, and its position in the alphabet show that *da* is meant. AT *da‘al* ‘practising deception’ (R). Less likely in the context is Az *dalda* ‘refuge, hiding-place’ (Äzizbây), derived by S. Tezcan from Mongol *dalda* ‘secret, hidden’, as in *Michetkeni ghurmusham / daldasinda durmusham* ‘I have erected a mosquito-net, I have stayed under its protection’, Ahundov ed. Tezcan, *op. cit.*, pp. 481, 32 l.25.

^f The letter idiosyncratically named *zêi* by SN is in the right place for *dhâl*, pronounced *z* in Azeri, but the word it is supposed to represent (APTaz *dhâlim, zâlim, zâlîm*) is written with a *dhâ*.

^g PT *râh*, PT *rû*.

^h *Sîn* is here wrongly supposed to represent a word beginning with *ص sâd* (APTaz *şafâ*); the next word but one, representing *sat*, shows that SN was aware of the two characters for non-emphatic and emphatic *s/ş* respectively in the Arabic alphabet which are pronounced alike in Persian and Turkish, but having only an auditory knowledge of these languages, he was unable to spell correctly.

ⁱ *sêhar-*, more like the pl. APT *şuhar* than the sg. *şahra*, Az. *sâhra*.

^j *ghêl haghâ*, read here, though one would expect a stronger vowel in the first word and not an apparent dative form in the second, as AP *qâlu’l Haqq* ‘word of God’ (*haqq* basically ‘right, justice’, defined by Steingass as ‘Jesus Christ, the Logos’).

^k With *zat* SN has, in its correct alphabetical order, the proper name of *ض dâd*, but the word he means it to represent begins with *ط dhâ*: APT *zurâf* ‘ingenious, acute, witty’, APT *zarâfat* ‘wit, humour, elegance’ (Steingass), Az *zarâfat* ‘joke’ (*shutka*, Äzizbây).

^l By *têi* SN means *tâ*, placed in the correct order of the word Turks in fact write with an initial *t*.

^m *sôzoyi*, 2nd p.s. possessive accusative of *söz*: in Erevan Azeri -y represents the usual -n; **sözüyi* would be more normal (see Shiraliev, pp. 80, 82-3).

Z for *Zulumât* [Darkness]ⁿ, *'Ain* for *Na'lat* [Cursedness]^o, *Gh* for *Ghadrat* [Treachery]^p, [of that] a mine! (?)^q

P for *Pîr Ustâd* [the Old Master]^r stands in prayer, *Q* for *Qudrat* [Power]^s, to the extent thereof (?)^t

K, A, L, A, M for *Kalâm* [Word]^u, *Saiad* [with] *W* and *N* in front^v [*NoWa*, i.e. *Sayat'-Nova*].

He created *L, A, L, Y* [*Lâlî* 'Redness']^w. Do not grieve, *Sayat'-Nova*!

As a would-be alphabetic poem, this is a disaster. His literate Azeri audience would have laughed him out of court — perhaps even literally,

ⁿ The root of this word, APTAz *zulumat*, *zûlmât* is doubtless connected with *zâlim* 'cruel' of verse 7; here SN has the correct letter.

^o The poet clearly has no idea of what words in written Azeri begin with *'ain*, which is not pronounced in Turkish and Persian, though consultation of a dictionary would have given him contextually useful terms like *'azâb/âzab* 'pain, punishment', *'ârsizliq/arsizliq* 'shamelessness', *'illat/illât* 'disease', *'anâyat* 'trouble', *'aiplama/eyiblâmâ* 'shaming, finding fault', etc. The implication is that his library was on the meagre side. He is, however, aware, possibly because of a compensatory lengthening of the first vowel, the sort of thing that excites Indo-European laryngalists, that some such sound exists in the Arabic form of his chosen word, which he opts idiosyncratically to represent as Armenian *g*; but he chooses a colloquial form of APTAz *la'nat*, the metathesised *na'lat* common in spoken Turkish and as a loan form in Armenian. The result is a typical mixture of knowledge and ignorance on the part of *Sayat'-Nova*.

^p A *ghadrat* (Lane; S and R list only APT *ghadr*). The poet's form *ghudêrat* is identical to the *ghudêrat* of different meaning representing *Q* for *qudrat* in the following verse.

^q *madanun* is difficult; it is read tentatively above as APTAz *ma'dan*, *mâ'dân* 'mine of any material substance', though it is not sure that it can be used thus figuratively. One assumes it is to distinguished from the *madan-a* of the following verse.

^r SN writes *P'* for *Fâ*; PT *pîr* begins with *P p* (aspirate), the third letter of the Persian-Turkish alphabet. *P'* is used by Georgians to represent the *F* not in their language, but Armenians have been able to pronounce this latter sound, and have written it, as *\$ f* since the eleventh century. SN ought to have been able to find one of the numerous Azeri words beginning with *f*.

^s *Ghap'* = *Qâf*; APTAz *qudrat*, *qûdrât*.

^t Written *madanawwwww.....*, but the signs after the final *-a* may be merely "decorative". *madana* is a difficult form. Above, very tentatively, Az *qûdrat madd-i-nâ* 'to the extent of power' has been read (APT *madd* 'extending, stretching, flood', Steingass, also no doubt 'something extended, extent', as witness P *madd-i bulbul* 'prolonged-song of the nightingale', AP *qadru maddi-n-nasari* 'the space of the extent of vision', Lane, Steingass).

^u There is, of course, no *Alif* written in the first syllable of this word in Arabic script (Az *kâlâm*).

^v Reading *ôn* as Az *ön* for *önündä* in front, 'W with N in front'.

^w As it stands, P *lâlî* 'redness', thus possibly relating to the poet's 'scarlet' theme discussed in his Azeri poem above (p. 319). But it is possible he miswrote *Yâ* for *Hâ*, intending PTaz *lâlah*^h, *lâle*, *lâlâ* 'tulip', a common image for the beloved's lips (so, 'he created the beauty of the beloved's lips').

for such ineptitude could easily have come to the ears of his royal sponsor. Sayat'-Nova has no real grasp of the Arabic alphabet, and can only guess at the way the Azeri he hears and speaks may be written. He clearly possessed no Azeri dictionary, One would assume that the Royal Library of the cultured kings of Georgia would have contained such a work, but perhaps the minstrel was not granted access to it, which is a pity for him and us, his admirers. It cannot be said, either, that the poem is otherwise of great value. His reference to (no doubt his) *pîr* or master's piety, his mention of darkness, cursedness, and treachery he suggests he experienced, and his praise for and/or complaint about the beloved's scarlet beauty or behaviour, that may related to the Azeri poem on the same theme that has been discussed above, is of some biographical value, though all that may be found in abundance in other poems. The poem hardly deserves its place at the forefront of the *Tetrak* — certainly not for any calligraphic merit. But it must not be hidden: portraitist, biographer, or literary critic, one must show one's subject warts and all.

The Azeri poem *Alif alah Bi bunat' yarat'ti*, annotated as an *alip'lama*,¹⁰¹ is no better, indeed if anything worse. It consists of four quatrains of would-be hendecasyllabic verse (the very first lacks one syllable), and the present writer, having perhaps already adequately demonstrated that he is no turcologist, has no wish to compound Sayat'-Nova's deficiencies with his own. The first two verses contain two errors, but their meaning (though not necessarily the *suite dans les idées*) is fairly clear:

Alif alah, Bi bunat' yarat'ti.

T'i t'arighat' yazan, Sê sanat' êila

'A for *Allâh*, B for *Bunyâd* [the Firmament] He created.

T for *Târîkh* [History] its writer, S for *Sanat* [the Year] let him establish.'

Here *bunat'* is a poor representation of APT *bunyâd* 'foundation'; PTaz *P* is omitted; *t'arighat'* is a wrong form of APTaz *târîkh* 'date, history', possibly confused with APTaz *tarîqat*, *târiqât* 'road, way, method, sect', which begins with the emphatic *t*, the 16th letter of the Arabic alphabet, the 19th of the Persian-Turkish; *Sê* represents the vulgar Turkish name for APT *thâ*, pronounced in PT as *s*, but it begins neither APT *sanat* 'year' nor APTaz *şan' at*, *sânât*. The final stanza is of some biographical interest:

¹⁰¹ T p. 25.

*Man Saiaťnova am, ôkhumisham Lam.
 Mim mardumi T'iflîz, Nun noghda bilam.
 Vôv var ustadlarda, Hêi huri gh(a)lam.
 Dêgum Lam Alif La(m) Ei yarat' eila.*

'I am Sayat'Nova, I have recited *LÂM*.
M for *Mardum* (Men) of Tiflis, *N* for *Nuqta*^h [the Point] may I know.
W for *Var* (There is) among the masters, *H* and *Hurr* [Nobility] of the Pen.
 I say *L A L* [*Lâl* 'ruby (lips)'], *Y* for *Yarat* [create], make (it).'

The stanza is also full of mysteries. The *Lam* the poet says he has recited, to an Armenian, would mean 'I weep', which is certainly his wont in his various odes. To a Muslim it might mean APT *lâm* 'fear, terror', though the poet in fact never confesses to that sentiment; APT *la'm* 'healing' is likewise hardly probable. What the Azeri Muslim might more readily think of is the beginning of the 98th Sura of the Qur'an, which he had often heard recited, and named commonly after the first two words: *Lam yakuni 'lladhîn kafarû min ahli 'l-kitâbi wa'l-mushrikîna munfakkîna hattâ ta'tîhumu 'l-bayyînatu, rasûl mina 'llâhi* 'They did not waver, those of the People of the Book and the idolaters, (from their promises to accept the Truth) until clear evidence had come to them (in the person of an apostle from God, Muḥammad)'. One must say that it would be a strange thing for a Christian to recite, since the passage is thought by commentators to refer to a belief, in the words of George Sale, 'that before the appearance of Mohammed, the Jews and Christians, as well as the worshippers of idols, unanimously believed and expected the coming of that prophet, until which time they declared they would persevere in their respective religions, and then would follow him; but when he came, they rejected him through envy'.¹⁰² Perhaps Sayat'-Nova meant no such thing as this, which would certainly have got him into trouble with the Catholicos; on the other hand, there are indications, particularly in his Azeri works, that he was influenced by Islam — as many of those who come into contact with its higher forms are. Such were, no doubt the people of Tiflis, who are referred to, apparently gratuitously, in the verse following in connection with the letter *M*. In another poem discussed above,¹⁰³ the cryptic *L* and *M* recited by the poet must refer to Leila and Majnûn, so that after all one is led to wonder whether it is not so in the present case, and the *M* is teasingly made to represent, as *majnûn* 'crazy',

¹⁰² *The Koran...*, tr. George Sale, The Chandos Classics, F. Warne: London, *n.d.*, p. 451, note x.

¹⁰³ *Doghru dur*, st. 4, v. 2, above, pp. 299-301.

the men of Tiflis. The APT *nuqta^h*, vulg. *noqta* ‘point’ that Sayat^h-Nova expresses a wish to know may be simply explained by the Persian expression *nuqta^h chîdan* ‘to put the dots in their proper places and accurately, as writing masters in teaching children’ (Steingass). Or he could be using it mystically as used in the APT expression *nuqta^h kull* ‘centre of all things’, etc. Az *nokhta* ‘halter’ as in *nokhtalamaq* ‘place someone under restraint, put on a lead’ (Äzizbäy) could be intended similarly mystically, as it were Sanskrit *yoga* ‘a yoking’. Such a common word could not be but familiar to his Azeri listeners, who could well interpret it in such a way. With regard to *H*, it is most likely that Sayat^h-Nova has confused the Arabic *ḥ* *Hâ* which correctly holds the position given it here, with the eighth letter ح *Ḥâ*, since the only “*hur-*” beginning with the former appears to be P *ḥôr* ‘sun, moon, star, fortune, horoscope, red, cloud, fog, suffocation from the vapour of a well’, a generous selection of meanings offered by Steingass (Redhouse does not list it as occurring in Turkish), none of which fits the context. The two letters are pronounced the same in Turkish and Persian, and Sayat^h-Nova, as is abundantly clear, was not literate in these languages. APT *ḥurr*, *hür* ‘free, noble, excellent, the best of anything’ (Redhouse) thus offers itself in a phrase that could with *qalam* ‘pen’ refer to freedom of expression. APT *ḥûr* ‘virgin of Paradise, houri’ will not fit the context. But PT *ḥûr* as an example of the literary device *maqlûb mustâwî*, palindrome or anagram, whereby it may represent APT *rûḥ* ‘soul, spirit’ (as in P *ḥûr az dast (jasm) raft* ‘The soul has left the body, life has departed’, Steingass) would greatly appeal to Sayat^h-Nova’s instinct for word-play, and may be intended here. Armenian listeners would doubtless not incur the poet’s censure if they thought of Arm. *hur* ‘fire’. *LAL* is a favourite combination of letters to form *Lâl* or *La’l* ‘ruby, ruby lips’. *Yarat* is the imperative of TAz *yaratmaq*, *yârâtmâq* ‘create, bring into existence’; it could also be read as P *yârat* ‘thy beloved’ (‘make her thy beloved’).

Another important Azeri alphabetical *qaraheja* which follows the order of the Arabic alphabet is that beginning *Alip^h alahi sevarsan* which the poet has dubbed ‘very good’.¹⁰⁴ It is not without its good points. It reads

¹⁰⁴ T p. 101: *Ese simghere alip'lama qaraheja diakh kargi arut'inas nat'k'omi vintz' istsavlos shendoba brdzos daitsera mart'is D k'ro UMG* ‘This song is an alphabetical *qaraheja*, very good, recited by Arut’in; may whoever learns it offer a “(Lord have mercy)”’; it was written on 4th March in 443 of the chronicon [A.D. 1755].

*Alip' alahi sevarsan, Bei banda,
T'eida na var: ik'i Alip' iki Re.
Sei sevinma Jim har ji gulina.
Hei Khei khar sizi Tal u Alip' ik'i Re.*

*Beila danish Zal zalumlar bilmasun.
Rei rangundan Zei Sin surast'in solmasun.
Shin sh(ě)harda adil hak'im olmasun.
Bada gedar Sat' u Alip' ik'i Re.*

*Zat' z(o)hmat'siz seir u shara qarishmaz.
Tei tolan(ě)r namard marda gorushmaz.
Ioli o(l)an yoli bilmaz sorushmaz.
Sora ch'ak'ar Ze u Alip' ik'i Re.*

*Ain aiar olan ap'armaz bulang.
Qain (Ghain) qairat' eila chak' soza ghadang.
P'ei p'ir usdad inan tanishan dabang.
Hargiz tut'maz Qap' u Alip' ik'i Re.*

*Kap' Alip' Lam Alip' Mim mina arindi.
Nun nihāl u salb u qadun sarindi.
Hei-dan saidn(o)va Vova varindi.
Lam Alip'-la Ie u Alip' ik'i Re.*

A duly diffident translation of this might be

'If A you love Allâh, (Oh) B for Banda [His slave],
In T what is there? Two A's, two R's [*tarâra*^a "fear"?^a].
S^b is for *Sevinmâ* [Do not rejoice] over every J, a Rose of Jî [Isfahan].^c
Hei!^d Kh is for the pain^e of the Khâr [Thorn]. D^f and A and two R's [*tarrâr*
'Stealer (of hearts)'].
May he who talks of misfortune^g never know
Z for *Zâlimlar* [Cruel beauties].

^a P, if one can trust Steingass, who for this word lists also the meanings 'timid; a dunghill'; not attested in Redhouse or Äzizbây. Perhaps AT *tarârat* 'plumpness, sleekness', Redhouse.

^b I.e. *Th*, pron. *s*; T *sevinmek* is written with an initial *sîn*.

^c *Jî* 'the city of Ispahan; name of a district in the dependency of Ispahan', S.

^d The letter *H* is left without a word to illustrate it; it was probably just sung by the minstrel as a sigh.

^e T *şizi* 'ache, lament', R.

^f Written *tal*, but the only letter-name this can indicate is *dâl*; a word with this initial is APT *darr* 'rich flow, abundance, gain', as in AP *li'llâhi darru-hu* 'how richly has God endowed him', S. It would seem better to amend the text to *ta* for ٲ *tâ*, which provides a more suitable word, APT *tarrâr* 'plunderer, pillager, stealer of hearts, a beauty', R.

^g APTaz *belâ*, *bâla* 'misfortune'; Az *danışmaq* 'speak, confer', Äzizbây, T *dânishmaq* 'enquire about, consult, converse', R; apparently a compound here, 'an enquirer as to misfortune'.

R for *Rängündän* [By your colour] *Z* [*Zâ'i* "destroyed"?],^h *S* for *May* your *Surat* [Image] turn not pale.

Sh for *Shehirdä* [In the City] may there not be a just judge [? for your sake]. It goes with the wind, (this) *S* and *A* and two *R*'s [*Sirâr* "speaking in enigmas"]ⁱ

Z for *Zähmäsiz* [troublefree] [as long as?] *Seyr* [travel] and *Shar* [the (real) Road, God's Law] are not confused.

T for the coward *Tolanir* [turns back]; (he and the real) man do not meet. He who is without (knowledge of) the way does not ask him who does not know it.

Questioning brings *Z* and *A* and two *R*'s [*Zärär* "harm"].

Ain - *Ayar* [Purity] will make nothing dirty.

Qain^j for display *Qeyrät* [Zeal], (but) put a bit^k on your words.

P^l - trust the *P'ir ustâd* [Old Master], recognizing each other as crazy^m.

Everyone does not achieve *Q* and *A* and two *R*'s [*Qarâr* "stability"]

K A L A M [*Kalâm* "the Word"]: the glassⁿ became transparent (?)^o.

^h *Zei* probably to be read concurrently as the name of a letter and a word, its position after *R* indicating that *zâ* has been confused with *ض* *dâd* pron. *z* (APTaz *dâ'i*, *zâ'i*, *zay(e)*).

ⁱ AT *sirâr* 'a speaking secretly or by signs', R; AT *sarâr* i.a. 'best of a race, stock, etc., (mystics) a saint's spiritual union with God', R, is less likely.

^j For *Ghain*: the Azeri word it illustrates is pronounced with the guttural plosive *q* (in T *g-*, *gayret*); the original Arabic has an initial *غ* *ghain* (AP *ghayrat* — pronounced in Persian often with *q-*).

^k *ghadang*: cf. *ver qadagha aji dillâ danishma. / härjayi söylämâ, härjayi demâ, / laf eyleyib gülâ gülâ danishmâ* 'Keep yourself in check, do not speak with a sharp tongue. Do not speak loosely, do not say things malapropos. When saying your word, speak affably', in the Azeri epic *Näjäfkân vâ Pärizâdkhânim*, Ahundov and Tezcan, *op. cit.*, p. 306, lines 32-33. *qadaq* is defined by Äzizbäy as 'rivet, fulcral staple in scissors'. *P ghadang* is listed in Steingass as 'ill-shaped, rude, unpolished, restless, stupid', which is either another word, or wrongly defined. *P qâdâna*^h 'fetter', from Italian *cadena* 'chain' may be the source of the Azeri word here.

^l *P'ei* is in the position of *Fâ* (*Fê*), but illustrates the Persian *p-* of *pîr*; given the host of Azeri words with initial *f-*, which Armenians have learned to pronounce since Crusading times if not before from the Arabs, and have a letter for the sound in their alphabet which SN uses in his Azeri in Armenian script, this seems to call for comment. The Georgians pronounce and write foreign words beginning with this sound with *p'*: SN had a Georgian education, but he must have known that Persian *p'ir* did not begin with *f-*; the aberration can, however, be explained only by Georgian usage, and some mental confusion.

^m *dabang*: cf. *T'e tesnoghêt mek êl tesav, divana-dabang is anum* 'If he who beholds you sees you once, you make him as one possessed and crazy', *Patkirk'ët*, st. 5 v. 4. S defines *P dabang* as a 'pustulous, ill-shaped man; a healthy youth (meaning doubtful)', but 'crazy' fits both the Azeri and Armenian contexts, here more 'other-worldly'.

ⁿ Reading *mina*, though the final *-a* is rather obscure, and its presence gives a verse of twelve instead of the required eleven syllables; but *Az min* 'thousand' hardly seems apt. and AT *meyn* 'weeding, speaking falsely' (R) would be written differently. PT *minâ* 'enamel, glaze, glass' (R), 'glass bead, enamel, alchemy, goblet, sky, azure vault' (S), *Az minâ* 'enamel, glaze' (Äzizbäy).

^o Reading T *ârinmaq* 'to be or become clean or pure' (Redhouse) rather than T *êrinmek* 'melt away, flag, fail' (Redhouse), *Az erinmâk* = T *üşemek* 'become limp' (Ahundov

N for *Nihâl* ['straightgrown sapling']: it was sent away for stripping^p and cutting^q.

From *H* Sayat'-Nova has passed to *W*.

L with *A* [*Lâ* "there is no"] *Y* and *A* and two *R*'s [*Yarar* "profit"^r] [in it all]!

Despite the usual errors due to an incomplete knowledge of the Arabo-Persian alphabet used by the Azeris, this poem largely merits its annotation 'good'. He apparently leaves the letter he calls *Hei* without an illustrative word, but one must remember that this poem, which the annotation calls a 'song', was publicly performed. A description of gestures he made in performing of a Georgian song has been preserved (above, p. 144). It does not call for much imagination to visualise that he pronounced *Hei* as a heartfelt sigh. In a like manner *Zei* is used simultaneously as the name of a letter and the word for 'destroyed' (by the beloved's colour). Thematically, the poem has a typical blend of the sacred (God's law) and the profane (complaining of the cruel mistress), together with good practical advice coupled with a mistrust of the way of the world (the sapling that is destined to serve as timber or firewood). One has probably solved all his alphabetical problems involving the Alifs and the two Râ's, but obscurities, resulting from what he here terms *sirâr* 'speaking in enigmas', remain. In st. 5 v. 1 he appears to be referring to St. Paul's image of seeing through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13,12) — and with the saint who spoke of σοφίαν Θεοῦ ἐν μυστηρίῳ, τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην 'the wisdom of God in a mystery, that which is hidden' (*ibid.*, 3,7) he had great natural affinity — but we cannot be sure. His reference to the Islamic Shar' or Divine Law in st. 3 v. 2 displays a splendid ecumenism rare among both Christians and Muslims in his day and in ours, though the fact that Tiflis had been ruled between 1665 and 1724 by the Mukhranian Bagratids, converts, as Persian viceroys, to Islam meant that such an attitude could not have been altogether novel. The poet's statement in the final pessimistic stanza that he has passed from *H* to *W* without comment may have more significance than the expression of an impatient abandoning of what he concludes is a fruitless undertaking: but what, it is difficult to say.

and Tezcan). A mystic meaning might be, 'through the Word of God the glass, through which we saw darkly, has become clear'.

^p *Az sârmäk* 'send out' (Äzizbây); *AT selb* 'stripping' (R).

^q *AT qadd* 'severing, cutting off' (R).

^r *TP yârâr* 'that serves a purpose, effective, useful' (R), *yarar* 'fit, useful, (rarely) brave; use, advantage, gain' (Steuerwald), *P yârâr* (from T) 'convenient, to the purpose' (S).

Another Azeri *qaraheja*, which does not incorporate the whole alphabet in order but which contains groups of letters of the alphabet which form words and which a note in the same neat Georgian hand of the text indicates are to be solved by Persian (*p'arse*, i.e. *farsî*)¹⁰⁵ also contains matter of interest to the poet's biography, in particular the use of *saiad* both as 'hunter' and the first element of his pseudonym.¹⁰⁶ The poem reads as follows:

*Hamasha ashughlar qahri beila dur.
bu dard gerag jim u alip' ik'i k'ap'.
ashughlugh k'ura dur yakhar yandurur.
t'anurmisan he u alip' ik'i k'ap'.*

*Soghuljan ilana tut'up' tur dovi
khasil t'okhianlar uzat'mish movi
meit'ar khana naq(i)z et'mish bedovi
yaramaz dur sin u alip' ik'i k'ap'.*

*Ashugh olan oz k'ovlina ha edar
dada olan dasta gulin p'ai edar
kham gianlar zari bilmaz zai edar
qat'i qat'dan be u alip' ik'i k'ap'.*

*Derin isha varan ah u zar tut'ar
ustada bilanlar namus ar tut'ar
saiad olan t'orin qurmish t'ar tut'ar
geja gunduz ik'i alip' ik'i k'ap'.*

*Ch'arkhi p'alag biza salmish t'ohmat'in
p'irdan p'iri almisham ch'ak'mam zahmat'in
saiadnoa sal ustada rahmat'in
yashumizi t'e u alip' ik'i k'ap'.*

A tentative translation of which might be

'The constant anxiety of minstrels is a torment.
The agony of necessity is *J* and *A* and twice *K'* [PT *châk* "a rent"^a].
Minstrelsy is a furnace, it burns and inflames.
Do you not know *H* and *A* and twice *K'* [APT *ḥakk* 'the piercing (of the heart)']?

Fear drives the serpent into the ground.
One cannot weave a mat^b without stretching the hair.

a Reading the letter *jîm* as *P chîm*. **b** Reading *khasil* with Arasli, p. 32, as *häsir*.

¹⁰⁵ T p. 87; the Georgian annotation describes it as 'a good *qaraheja* recited by Arut'in'.

¹⁰⁶ See above, p. 71.

The Bedouin (horse) will harm the stable.

It is mischievous, *S* and *A* and twice *K*^c [*sakk* 'nail'^c].

Being a minstrel brings anxiety into one's heart.

Being a Master (*dada*) brings fragrance^d to a bouquet of roses.

Those dressing slovenly know nothing of gold and do harm,

Fold upon fold (their dresses) *B* and *A* and twice *K*^e [*bakk* "tearing"^e].

He who produces profound works is seized by sighs and groans.

Those who know their Master (*ustâd*) are seized by reverence and modesty.

The hunter (*saiad*) spreads his net and lays his (birdlimed) perch.

Night and day two *A*'s and twice *K*^f [*'akak* "the magpie"^f].

The Wheel of Fate has cast us unto disrepute.

(But) I have absorbed maturity from my old-master (*pîr*) and suffer no anxiety.

Saiadnova, arrange a "(Lord have) mercy" for the master-musician (*ustâd*).

Our tears are *T* and *A* and twice *K*^g [*tak* "flowing"^g].

The poem clearly contains many features familiar to Sayat'-Nova's œuvre, such as the suffering of the lover-poet, veneration for the master, cruel fate that has brought him into disrepute, etc. One might wonder about the probable solution of the cryptogramme 'two *A*'s and two *K*'s' in st. 4 v. 4 as 'magpie', even if it does somehow relate to the image of the bird-hunter of the previous verse. This chattering, imitative and thieving bird, which might interfere with the hunter's work, is not a favourite of the poet, who uses it elsewhere as a symbol of inferior minstrels (perhaps dressed slovenly, cf. st. 3 vv. 3-4) in the Georgian *Galobs t'ut'i, qazalakhi, bulbulis bani mindoda* 'The parrot squawks, and the magpie; I want the deep voice of the nightingale'.¹⁰⁷ The (wild) Bedouin horse disturbing the stable might refer to some intrusive being upsetting the order of the Georgian court, perhaps to himself. But other items may well now strike one as more silly than strange. What could be the significance of the frightened serpent, or the mat woven by stretching the fibres? One could no doubt hazard a guess that could relate to the minstrel's own situation. It is, however, in the nature of the cryptic to be

c AP i.a. 'studding with huge nails, a nail' (*S*, not in *R* or *Ä*). d *p'ay*, AT *fâ'ih*, vulg. *fâyih* 'an odour diffusing itself', beside *fâ'ihah* 'a diffused odour, aroma, perfume' (*R*); a more grammatical construction would seem to be **düstâ-yi gülünâ fâyih edâr*. e AP *bakk* 'bruising, tearing, crowding' (*S*). f P *'akak*, form of AP *'aq'aq* 'magpie'; and/or AP *'akk* 'restraining, repeating often (injuries, etc.)' (*S*). g PT *tak*, albeit with only one -*k*.

¹⁰⁷ St. 1 v. 1, B p. 35.

resistant to decipherment, and the passage of two centuries does not help. The English daily wrestle with crossword clues that tax the knowledge and ingenuity of contemporaries. For how long will the slangy puns in, say, 'After joint, Yank is without conscious thought' lead to the solution 'Knee-jerk'? Archbishop Laud, known mainly to Armenian scholars as an important collector and donor of Armenian manuscripts, has not faded from English consciousness, so that one may always see through the punning clue 'Laud end to performance', i.e. 'Execution'.¹⁰⁸ It is safe to say that the affairs of Tiflis impinging on Sayat'-Nova's career are less well recorded. The poet's enigmas, being a mirror of life under a cloud of unknowing, are a lesson to us all. As Hâfiz put it, 'Our existence is a riddle, so that seeking to ascertain the truth, O Hâfiz, is but fables and enchantments'.¹⁰⁹

Although Sayat'-Nova's alphabetical *qaraheja* is mostly in Azeri, in a few instances he transferred the technique to Armenian and Georgian. One that originally followed the order of the whole Armenian alphabet (at least two stanzas comprising *Ch* (or *M*, see note i below) are now missing) is reproduced by I fol. 60. Transliterated from his Georgian script with some capitals and *ë*'s supplied as usual, it reads:

AIB Astvats siris, BAN^a Bari katzⁱ
 GIM Gagat^ët^b ara, DA u AIB T^cO^c
 ECH^d Erani ch^ë ka, ZA Zalum mart'un
 E IT^e Êresit di, T^cO u AIB T^cO.
 ZHE Zhamanak hasav ach^ëkeris lalü
 IN Indzi gëtz^ëetz^ëir dard vukhpalu
 LIUN Lalov im es ashkharis mënalü
 Endur vakh k^ëashetzⁱ KHE u AIB T^cO.
 TSA Tsoyum mënatz^ë, dus ch^ëekav navët^f
 KEN Kamov aveltz^ërel k^u sërtil t^zavët^f
 HO^g Haman kanch^{um} is, DZA Dzainov t^zav(ë)t^ë
 GHAD^h Ghabul katz^ë, [CHE]ⁱ charis HE u VU(V) AIB T^cO.

- a Written for *Ben*, like the Georgian name of the letter (*Bani*). b Miswritten *gagatit*.
 c Miswritten *to*. d Miswritten *inch*, probably for *iech* = *yech* with prothetic *y*.
 e For *ë ët*, Arm. *ë* being reproduced by Ioane as *G i* (see note f). f Written *-it* for *-ët*.
 g Indistinctly written. h Written *qad qabul* (*q* as commonly for Arm. *gh*).
 i CHE illustrating *charis* is to be restored; omitting *u* after HE would give the required 11 syllables. H pp. 67, 249 amends HE to CHE, wrongly thinking that Ioane failed to recognise *chat*; see n. q.

¹⁰⁸ *The Times* crossword competition, 4th April 1993.

¹⁰⁹ *Wujûd-i mâ mu'ammas't*, Hâfiz, / *Ki taḥqîqash fasûnast wa fusâna*, ghazal no. 487.

(.....)
(.....)^j

RE Run *TZ*^o *Tz'amk'il e HIUN*^k (*H*)unar uni
P'I(U)R *P'aketz'in dur'en*, *K'E*¹ *K'ar uni*
Ev Ô FEN^m *kart'alu Astvats char uni*
Halal Saiat'novun KEN u AIB T'O.

'A may you love *Astvats* [God]. *B* stand *Bari* [well].
G make your *Gagat'* [summit] *D* and *A T'* [*Dat'* 'Justice']
E there is no *Erani* [Good Luck] for *Z* the *Zalum* (cruel) man.
Ê and *Ē*, over your *Êres*^o [Face] place (your) *T'at'* [Had].
Zh the *Zhamanak* [Time] has come for my eyes to weep.
I you have thrown *Indzi* [To me] an agony to lament.
L for *Lalov* [with Weeping] I am to remain in this world.
Therefore, alas! I have drawn a *Kh* and *A T'* [*Khat'* 'a line'] (through it)^p.
TS in the *Tsov* [Sea] it remained, your ship did not emerge.
K by your *Kam* [Will] the pain in your heart increased.
H you *Haman* [for ever] announce your pain *DZ* with your *Dzain* [Voice].
Gh for *Ghabul katz'* [Accept it], [*Ch*] for my cure (*char*) (there is) *H* and *V*
A T' [*Havat'*^q 'Faith'].....
R for *Run* [the Brook^r] has *TZ'* *Tz'amk'il* [Dried up] It has (had?) *W*
(*hUnar* 'means')^s (of healing?). *P'* they shut (*p'aketz'in*) the door, *K'* it
has *K'ar* [a stone before it].
To read *Ô* and *F* God alone has the power [to find words that fit].
Permitted (only) to Sayat'-Nova is *K* and *A T'* [*Kat'* 'Milk'].^t

An Armenian *qaraheja* that does not follow the order of the alphabet, but is content, like the Azeri *Hamasha ashughlar* analysed above, to use groups of letter names to conceal words and to form a recurrent rhyme, is preserved by Ioane.¹¹⁰ It runs as follows:

j At least two stanzas are missing, comprising *m* to *s*. **k** Miswritten *uiun*. **l** Miswritten *kesh*. **m** Written *o* and *p'en*, there being no Georgian letters corresponding to *ô* and *f*. **n** For *Dat*; Ioane writes this with the correct *-t*, though the letter which is required by the repeated rhyme is *t'o*. **o** One can take *êresit'* (for *êresêt*, Cl. *eresêt*) as comprising *ê* and *ě*. **p** *P khat' ba-jahân kashîdan* 'to renounce the world' (S). **q** See above n. i; the *ch* with which *H* replaces *he* gives *chat'*, defined by him (p. 299) as 'millet or Egyptian wheat bread', a meaning that is impossible to fit into the present context. **r** More correct would be *Ř* (for which Georgian has no way of distinguishing from *R*). **s** There is no Armenian complete word beginning with *w*: SN does his best in the first syllable of the word written *hoWnar*. **t** I.e. he must be content to remain 'a raw-milk-drinking man' (*hum kat'nakir at'ami zat'*. st. 4 v. 2 of *Ashkharës me p'anjara ê*. T p. 133, I fol. 63A. H p. 70).

¹¹⁰ Fol. 58, annotated *ese somkhuri qaraheja aris* 'This is an Armenian *qaraheja*'; H p. 66.

Mēta ēshkhi k'uren khalis dārnalu.

Si(r)tis elav K'e u Aib erku Ban.

Kamav sovden mēta dardēn bārnalu

Um bērnim Se u Aib erku Ban.

Dada piti khoskēn qadimi shinē

Sharbabi mich'umēn kham t'il ch'(ē h)inē

Joru nēman ch'asē, im deden dzin ē

Mart' vur ili Nu u Aib erku Ban.

Inch'pes vur kērakēn ch'i dimana mum,

Enpes saqat' kuli ovor khosi hum.

Saiat' Noven asatz', ēndur ch'ē paksum

Erku ach'kēs erku Aib erku Ban.

'I entered the furnace of love to be purified.

My heart emerged *K* and *A* and two *B*'s [APT *kabâb* 'roasted'].

Willingly I engaged in this trade to relieve my agony.

To whom may I impute the *S* and *A* and two *B*'s [APT *sabab* 'the cause']?

A master must fashion a classic [*lit.* ancient] saying.

He will not weave a raw thread among the silk.

He will not say like a mule: my father is a horse,

A man who would be a *N* and *A* and two *B*'s [*nabob*].

Just as wax will not withstand fire,

So will he be offal who speaks raw (words).

Sayat'-Nova has said, Therefore there will not lack

In my two eyes two *A*'s and two *B*'s [PT *âb âb* 'water water', i.e. water in each of them]!

This is clearly a light piece, the sentiments of which are not to be taken too seriously. The solution of the cryptogram '*N* and *A* and two *B*'s', if the above interpretation '*nabob*' is correct, has a bearing on the poet's biography. Hasrat'yan interprets *nabab* as 'not a *bâb*', i.e. 'incongruous, unsuited' (*anhamapataskhan, anharmar*, p. 303), from PT *bâb* 'worthy, deserving, suitable' (Redhouse), though a privative **na-bâb* is not listed in Steingass or Redhouse. *Nabab* is a form of APT *nawwâb*, a plural (used as a singular in Persian) of *nâ'ib* 'vice-gerent, regent' (R). The form with medial *-b-* is attested in Spanish *nababo* in 1604, in Portuguese *nababo* in 1615, and in French *nabab* from 1652 as 'a Muslim gentleman of distinction [in India] like Hindi *râjâ*' (Hobson-Jobson); the form *nabob*, for a filthy rich British India-hand, became common in English with the performance of Samuel Foote's comedy *The Nabob* in 1772.¹¹¹ *nabâb* is not

¹¹¹ K. Lokotsch, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der europäischen Wörter orientalischen Ursprungs*, Heidelberg, 1927, no. 1542, p. 124; O. Bloch and W. v. Wartburg, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*, Paris, 1964; Hobson-Jobson 1990, p. 610.

listed by Platts as a native Urdu form, though a dialectal development of the bilabial fricative *-ww-* to the bilabial plosive *-b-* would be no cause for surprise; but it may be a European development. *nabab* is not listed in Armenian, Georgian and Azeri dictionaries, which would make Sayat'-Nova's use of it, if it is, as is probable, the solution of his cryptogramme, of special interest. Did he know the word because it was current in the Caucasus in the middle of the 18th century, as is very possible, even if imported by foreign merchants, or does it corroborate the theory, based upon such a phrase as 'Do not dig the grave of Sayat'-Nova in India, Abyssinia, or Arabia',¹¹² that the poet had actually travelled in the sub-continent, possibly as an apprentice or journeyman dyer or weaver? The context in which he uses the word suggests a European pejorative meaning, that of English *nabob*, though the correct form was wellknown to Ottoman Turks as 'Chief Canon Judge' (as in *nâ'ib un-nawâb* 'Chief Assistant to a Chief Canon Judge' (Redhouse); the APT meaning 'one who naturally takes another's place in his absence or at his death, a locum-tenens or successor' (R), is not relevant to the context here.

Sayat'-Nova does not indulge in much alphabetic wordplay in his extant Georgian poems, but there are two exceptions, both important, to this general rule. The first is his final quatrain to his light-hearted poem 'I speak to you because':

Saiat'nova qmaa sheni.
sakhit'a khar mt'vare-mzeni.
sakheli mak'vs SANI T'ENI,
*VINIs bolos ANI vnakhe.*¹¹³

'Sayat'-Nova is your serf.
 By your countenance you are the Sun and Moon.
 I have (in my) name *S* and *T*.
 At the end of *V* I have seen *A* [*Ani*].'

The pun on the Georgian name of the letter *A*, which coincides with that of the lady with whom his name is linked in Armenian poems, is most significant.

In Georgian also there is a complete alphabetical *qaraheja* in which every letter of the long Georgian alphabet is followed by an illustrative phrase. The literary value of this exercise is doubtful. But a poem such as this is very much like the Rohrschach tests of modern psychologists,

¹¹² *Sayat'-Novu gerezmanēn Hind, Habash, Arab mi ani*, in *Dun ēn gēlkhen imastun is*, st. 5 v. 4, I fol. 64, H p. 20.

¹¹³ *Shent'ana mitom vlaparakob*, st. 5, I fol. 18, B p. 60.

wherein the interviewee is asked to state what the shape of assorted inkblots remind him. Sayat'-Nova's alphabetical exercise might also serve as an association test, which should afford some insight into the mind of the poet — as, up to a point, he himself must have intended. Ioane annotates the poem as a 'Eulogy of the Alphabet', used as its title by Baramidze, who gives no indication of his source for his text, though one suspects that it comprises many emendations of his own. The following recension is based upon their two versions,¹¹⁴ with attention paid to the required 8 + 8 syllabic metre.

AN - *amist'ana naghveli*. BAN - *bevr katz'sa^a daemart'os*.
 GAN - *gulsab^b da p'iltvs^c daushrobs*, ratz' katz's^d *gulshi ch'aemart'os*.
 DON - *dedmamas da dzmas^e gahqris*, rasatz'^f *sakhlshi^g shaemart'os*.
 EN - *enas pirshi daashrobs^h*, VENⁱ - *sitqvas ver^j gaemart'os*.
 ZEN - *zepirat^k mogakhseno*, siqvaruli *dzneli aris*.
 Êa - *es^l hashas p'itz's^m daark'mevsⁿ*, dznelat^o *gasakhsneli aris*.
 T'AN - *t'aysa da guls sheakhvevs*, usurvazis *tsneli aris*.
 IN - *imist'vis viarebi*. KAN - *ch'ems kars ar daemart'os*.^p
 LAN - *lamazo*, dakhatalo. saqvarelo *t'emisao*.
 MAN - *misat'vis gekhvetsebi*, guli *gkondes^q ch'emisao*.
 NAR - *netat' shens mijnursa*, dzali *misdevs lobisao*.
 (Y)IN - *yimist'ana^s* ON - *omi rostoms^t zals ar daemart'os*.
 PAR - *patara quri migde*. ZHAN - *zhamia ch'emi dardi*.
 RAE - *ras mipareb ch'emsas^s*. SAN-satsqlad^t *naghvels^u ch'avardi^v*.
 TAR - *tqbili khar*, rdzisa *tsqarov^w*, UN - *uz(o)mod shlili^x vardi*.
 P'AR - *p'er-p'erad p'ot'liano*. K'AN - *k'veqanas aemart'os*.
 GHAN - *ghameshi*, QAR - *qarshi var^y*, SHIN - *shin ar vitz'i vin ari*.
 CH'IN - *ch'ini ar merch'is t'valsa*, TZ'AN - *tz'otz'khali*, DZIL - *dzinari*.

a B; I *bevr katz's* (leaving the octosyllabic hemistich one syllable short. b I; B *guls* (one syllable short). c B; I *p'itz's* (wrongly remembered from st. 2 v. 2). d I; B *katz's ro*. e B; I *dzmasa* (one syllable too many). f I; B *ra* (one syllable short). g I; B *-itz'*. h I; B *maakvdens*. i I; B om(!). j I; B *sitqva veghar*. k I; B *-ad*. l I; B *êaes* (the name of this now obsolete letter Ê being *he*, B may have thought that it represents *hasha* rather than (wrongly) *es*). m B; I *p'iitz'*. n B; I *dark'mems*. o I; B *-ad*. p I (using rhyme of st. 1 v. 1); B *kargs chemsas ar emart'os* (insufficient rhyme). q B; I *k'ondes*. r I; B *netavi*. s Amended from I *in imis t'ana*, B *y - yimist'ana* (the name of the now obsolete letter ѡ *y* is *ye*). t I; B *rostom*. s I; B *k'alo*. t B; I *satsqals*. u B; I *naghvel*. v I; B *sht'avardi*. w B; I *tar - tqbilo dzisa tsqaro* (ungrammatical, badly spelt, and one syllable short). x Amended from I *uzmot' gashlilo vardi*, B *uzmozed shlili vardi*. y I; B *qar - karshi khar*. z B; I *aris* (non-rhyming).

¹¹⁴ I fol. II: *Ese anbant' k'eba t'akhmizis khmazed it'k'omis* 'This is a eulogy of the alphabet in the form (*khma*) [lit. 'voice', a very loose usage] of a *takhmis* [APT 'quintuple', here 'poem of five stanzas']; B pp. 73-74.

TSIL - *tsmindisa*, CHAR - *chirime*, KHAN - *khumari var*, *ghvt'inari*^{aa}.
 JAN - *javrit'a seidnova*^{bb}, HAE - *HOE*^{cc} *shaemart'os*.

- A - with this thing (*amis*) bitterness B - upon a myriad (*bevr*) of men will come.^a
 G - it will dry up heart (*gulsa*) and lungs^b, whatever moves^c in the heart of a man.
 D - mother-and-father (*dedmama*) and brother casts it out, and whatever (one's) house may be furnished with.
 E - the tongue (*ena*) in the mouth it dries up^d, V - it will not (*ver*) bring (one) to speech.
 Z - by word-of-mouth (*zepirat'*) let me remind you: Love is a difficult thing.
 Ê/He - this (*es*) names the reneging (*hasha*)^e of an oath, [though] it [Love] is hardly something-which-releases [one from an oath].
 T' - it binds the head (*t'av*) and heart: it is a switch of the wild-vine.
 I - therefore (*imist'vis*) I am a wanderer. K - it will build me no door (*kari*)^f [to call my own].
 L - O beautiful one (*lamazo*), pretty-as-a-picture, O one beloved of (all) the land!
 M - for that (*misat'vis*), I beg you, O take the heart of me!
 N - happy he (*netavi*) who is mad-with-love for you: his strength exceeds that of the lion!
 Y - against that (*yimist'ana*), O - a war (*omi*) [waged] by Rustom son of Zal would accomplish nothing.
 P - lend a little (*pataara*) ear to me! Zh - a plague (*zhami*) is my agony (of love)!
 R - what (*ras*) do you intend in my regard?^g S - miserably (*satsqlad*) I have fallen into bitter-straits!^h
 T - you are sweet (*tqbili*), O well of milk, U - rose blossoming (with) numberless (*uz(o)mod*)ⁱ petals.

aa B; I *ghvinari*. bb I; B *sayat'nova*. cc Amended from B *hae* - *h'oes*, I *he h'oe* (*h'* the now obsolete *æ*); B has the required 8 syllables.

a The poet does not appear to keep separate the three roots *mart'* distinguished by Tschenkeli, but which all appear to be based on the idea of 'right': *mart'¹-va* 'to direct, set upright, straighten, arrange', *mart'²-eba* 'bring upon' ('direct against?'), *mart'³-eba* 'be owing' ('be one's right'), cf. *mart'i kut'khe* 'right angle', *mart'ali* 'true' ('right?'); the Armenian (loanword?) *mart'* 'means; possible', whence *mart'-em* (aor. *mart'etz'i*) 'find means, contrive' (cf. the meanings of *mart'¹ va*), *mart'-em* (aor. *mart'atz'i*) 'be able, have the power' (to find the means to do something and to be able to do something are practically synonymous) must be connected. Here the verb is a form of *mart'²*, as *da-mart'eba* (*kargi dagemart'os* 'may good befall thee', Tsch p. 718). b B; I 'oath' (misremembered, anticipating st. 2 v. 2). c The preverb *ch'a* 'downwards' is not listed with this verb in Tschenkeli, etc., but is synonymous with *da-*, as in *davemart' ebi* 'I direct myself downwards', Tsch p. 717b). d I; B 'kills'. e The name of the now obsolete letter *ê* (*ey*) is *He*; the poet may be representing its sound with *es* (never written *ês*) and its name with *hasha*. f I; B 'this will not institute anything-good chez moi'. g I; B 'O woman' (!). h B; I 'I have fallen into miserable bitter-straits (lit. gall)'. i Reading thus for I *uzmot'*, B *uzmozed*, since *uzomo-* 'numberless' must be meant, not *uzmo-* 'fasting, with empty stomach' (the syncope is unusual, but see also n. j).

- P**^r - O one with leaves (*p'ot'(o)liano*^j) of many colours. **K**^r - for the (whole) world (*k'veqana*) she will rise up.
Gh - At night (*ghame-shi*) **Q** - I am opposite (*qarshi*)^k. **Sh** - who is within (*shin*) I do not know.
Ch^r - Porcelain (*ch'ini*) I do not prefer to the eye, (which is) **Tz**^r - alive (*tz'otz'khali*), **Dz** - (and) moist (?) (*dzinari*).^l
Ts - The holy one's (*tsmindisa*) **Ch** - misfortune (come upon) me (*chirime*)!
Kh - I am a jester (*khumari*), (but) one-of-God's.^m
J - to his detriment (*javrit'a*), Sayat^r-Nova, **Hi Ho!**ⁿ, will be set up!^o

The poem is very regularly constructed, 36 letters being acrostically distributed over five quatrains of verses of sixteen syllables (8 + 8, the first hemistich of v. 12 divided 5/3, that of v. 19, 4/4), with the first three verses of each quatrain in monorhyme and the rhyme of each fourth verse in compound monorhyme (*radif*). This latter repeated rhyme manipulates the verb *emart'os* 'will be set up, etc.' with various preverbs in -a, though this has defeated the ingenuity of the poet in that *da-emart'os* has been used three times instead of the expected once. The ancient Georgian alphabet comprised 38 letters, and the poet has used some already obsolete in his time. The 23rd letter ჯ *ü/vi* has been omitted, the fact that it never had a numerical value being perhaps of some relevance. Unless it introduced the correct reading behind the suspect *ghvt'inar/ghvinari* — and since it is not difficult to find a rhyme for *vinari* and *dzinari* (e.g. *mdinari* 'flowing, fluctuating'), there must be a compelling motive for the form — the old 35th letter ჳ *q* is omitted: a learned Georgian could easily have thought of i.a. a word often occurring in annotations to the poems, viz. *qma* 'voice' (written as one would expect as *khma* in the *Tetrak*¹¹⁵), and *qmanarnari* 'having a pleasant,

^j Written *p'ot'liano*, with syncopation for metrical reasons. ^k I, reading TAz *qarshi* 'opposite', G *qar-i* being only the name of the letter Q; B reads *karshi khar* 'you are indoors or at court', but to use *k* to illustrate *q* would be inadmissible for a speaker of Georgian or Tiflis Armenian. ^l No *dzinari* is listed in the usual dictionaries; it is read here as a possible (though admittedly improbable) dialectal equivalent of *chanari* 'moist' (Tsch), which makes sense. ^m Apparently B, but *ghvt'inari* (conn. *ghvt'is* 'of God') is nowhere (else) attested; I *ghvinari*, suggesting *ghviniani* 'full of wine' (*ghvino*) is likewise unattested; see p. 142, n. 29. ⁿ The names of the final two letters of the Georgian alphabet, the last not in current use, are used as interjections. ^o The preverb *sha-* is dialectal, e.g. Mingrelian (see G.A. Klimov, *Ėtimologičeskii slovar' kartvel'skikh yazikov*, Moscow, 1964, p. 214), used here *rhythmi gratia* in place of *she-* (*she-imart'eba* 'he will be wound up, will right himself' ('wird aufgezogen, angekurbelt, richtet sich auf'), T p. 717b).

¹¹⁵ E.g. p. 107.

soft voice'¹¹⁶ would be both relevant and provide a bisyllabic rhyme; one must resist the temptation, however, to write Sayat'-Nova's poems for him. The names of the final two letters of the alphabet, *h* (*Hae*) and the obsolete *h'* (*Hoe*) — it would have been a simple matter to find a word to illustrate the still active former sound — have been wittily used as sighs of resignation, like the *Hei* of the Azeri alphabetic poem discussed above.¹¹⁷ As a poem in its own right, the work stands comparison with other *plaintes* by Sayat'-Nova. The portrayal of Love as a thing which separates parents from children and brother from brother (which recalls Christ's description of his mission, *Matt.* 10,35-37), as something that brings about the renegeing of oaths, that dries up the tongue (Sappho again), that entangles head and heart like the branches of the vine, that brings the lover misery and sighs, is impressive. Of special interest to the poet's own life is the very first verse, for in what way does *An*, representing 'this one', bring a multitude of men misery, if it is not another allusion to the lady Anne who figures throughout the poet's whole work as his obsessive beloved?¹¹⁸ It is not difficult to see a related pun in the statement that *zhami* is his agony, when this may be interpreted, "innocently", as 'plague', but also as 'time', since time, whether it be the length of his suffering, the period of separation from the beloved, or possibly the difference in their ages, is certainly no infrequent theme of his.¹¹⁹ The 'holy one' or 'saint' (*tsmindā*) whose ills he wishes upon himself (*sheni chirime* 'may your misfortune come upon me' is otherwise a set formula meaning nothing more than 'my dear fellow', 'mein

¹¹⁶ *Tsch* (*khmanarnari*); it is not certain that the compound existed in ancient Georgian to be written with *q̇*, though that is of doubtful relevance: *narnari q̇ma* 'pleasant voice' occurs in the ancient epic *Rusudaniani* (c. 485, listed by Ch' as *narnari khma*).

¹¹⁷ *Alip' - ilahi sevarsan*, st. 1, v. 4, see above, pp. 342 n.d., 344.

¹¹⁸ See above, Chapter Three, pp. 102-118.

¹¹⁹ *Ajab k'ani zhamanak ê, t'ak' gitenam tarit, êrneq* 'It is strange how long a time it is, but as long as I know your year [? date of birth; ? anniversary], it is well (with me)', st. 1 v. 1, H p. 38 (the exact meaning of this phrase is, not untypically, obscure). *Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak'* May ye know that one year brought (bore?) me and my beloved (? together)', st. 1 v. 1, T p. 127, H p. 75. *Vuntz'or vur qarib bêlbulên me tarov baghin karot ê* 'Since the wandering Nightingale has been missing from the garden for one (whole) year', st. 1 v. 1, T p. 120, H p. 45. *Tas tari ê man im galis p'adishahi sharip'i pês / Okhtên tari êl man gu k'am sazên dzeris qaribi pês* 'For ten years I go about like one of the king's nobles; / Seven years, too, I come saz in hand like Gharib (the Wanderer)', in *Me khosk unim*, st. 4 vv. 2-3, T p. 121, I fol. 67A, H p. 46. *Tasnumek amis munj im katz'i, tarên êrvats im* 'For eleven months I remained silent, I am consumed by (a life of) exile', in *P'ahradên mirats*, I fol. 60A, H p. 65, st. 1 v. 4. *Hentz' gidim, t'e ch'urs tari ê k'aghak'ên k'arvan ch'ê mēti* 'I only know that for four years the caravan would not enter the City', in *Ajab k'u sirtên ov shinitz'*, st. 2 v. 3, I fol. 68, H fol. 68. Etc.

Lieber', Meckelein) is even for Sayat'-Nova a surprising hyperbole if it is the beloved to whom it refers, as it almost certainly is: nowhere in his Armenian or Azeri verse is the beloved referred to as *surb* or *müqäddäs* — Heaven forbid! she is the merciless one, the vessel of that ruinous love which occasions such unholinesses as the breaking of oaths. Perhaps it is just that *tsminda* is one of the most common words in Georgian beginning with *ts*, and Sayat'-Nova's spirit has been carried away by the letter, an understandable hazard in an alphabetic poem. There is a poignant melancholy in his complaint in stanza 2 that for the sake of Love he has become a wanderer with no hope of a home that recalls that of Rainer Maria Rilke in his *Herbsttag*: 'Wer jetzt kein Haus hat baut sich keines mehr'. The final statement in his poem, 'To his detriment Sayat'-Nova, Hi ho! will set himself up (or will be set up'; *shaemari'os* can be reflexive or passive), meaning that the poet will rise or be raised high only to fall all the lower, is prophetic, and will form the theme of his last major Georgian poem, 'O my unfortunate head'.¹²⁰ The definitions given by Tschenkeli, 'wird aufgezogen/angekurblet' ('will be wound up') makes one suspect that thus to be set up or wound up signifies the same victimisation as in colloquial English.

A term used by Sayat'-Nova in one Armenian and five Azeri *ghazals*¹²¹ which might be considered cryptic, at least insofar as it is non-Armenian in origin, has caused much mystification among the poet's commentators. The full form *Shahkhat'ayi* occurs in the Azeri poem beginning

*Dedilar k'i shahkhat'ayi ch'aghiroram shahi shah.
ghalkhar bu divanay k'ovlum. dushar darda gahi gah.
Ach'ëlup'tur zilip'larun gul, susanbar dur, madat'.
anjagh shap'agkhini gôrdum, bilmam, nazardur, madat'.¹²²*

'They say I call out *Shahkhat'ay*, king (son?) of a king.¹²³

This foolish heart of mine rises up, (and) falls at times into (love's) agony.
The rose of your locks blossoms, it is (fragrant as) water-mint. Help!

¹²⁰ *mep'et'agan mejlissh mitsodebuli / t'avadebt'an pativtz'emit* 'summoned by kings to the assembly / admitted with honour together with princes', *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, st. 3 vv. 1-2, B p. 24; *tasën tari man im galis p'adishahi sharip'i pês* 'For ten years I go about like one of the king's nobles', *cit. above*, n. 119.

¹²¹ See above, Chapter Seven, p. 269.

¹²² T p. 2.

¹²³ Reading P *shâh-i shâh*. AP *shahshâh* 'assiduous, attentive, jealous, a virago' (S) is hardly apt.

Barely have I glimpsed your brilliance.¹²⁴ I do not know if it's the evil eye.
Help!'

In other poems the term is reduced to *shakhayi* (doubtless for *shakhat'ayi*), *shakhat'ayi*, *shakhat'ai*, and *shakhat'ali* (-a).¹²⁵ Shervinski helps no-one in rendering it in his Russian translation as *shakhatan*, though he gives the (incomplete) form *shakhatai* of *Shat sirun* is in his note.¹²⁶ In that poem, and in the Azeri poem just quoted, the term must refer to the beloved. In the Azeri poem beginning

Dedilar k'i shakhat'ai êli alam yaradan
*yokhdan var êt'un duniani salam k'alam yaradan*¹²⁷

'They said, *Sha(h)khat'ai*, creator of the (whole) region(s) of the world,
You made the world out of nothing, creator of everything [*lit.* Peace and
Word]'

the term clearly refers to God. For Hasrat'yan the word is 'incomprehensible', for K'och'oyan 'unexplained'; Shervinski says 'the meaning of this word has not been established'. They do not help themselves in their search for a meaning in quoting (as though by conspiracy) only the form *Shakhat'ai*, without the -h- of the full form *Shakhkhatai*. Hasrat'yan guesses that the term refers to 'God or some superior spirit', K'och'oyan that it is 'a poetic form apparently expressing religio-philosophical ideas', Shervinski that it is 'probably a symbol of the godhead, a type of melody, a form of versification'.¹²⁸ *Shakhkhatai* is, however, fairly clearly Persian شاه خطائی *shâh-i Khaṭâ'î* (Redhouse transcribes in fact *khaṭâyî*) 'Cathayan king', 'King of Cathay (خطای *Khaṭây*), Chinese emperor'. *Khaṭâyî* was the pen-name (*takhalluṣ*) of the royal poet Shâh Ismâ'îl Şafî, founder of the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century, and the style *Shâh Khaṭâyî* is, along with *Darvîsh Khaṭâyî*, *Dost Khaṭâyî*, *Pîrîm Khaṭâyî*, etc., found in the manuscripts.¹²⁹ Although the

¹²⁴ Either the -kh- or -gh- *shap'aghkhini* is otiose, a more correct form of APTAz *shafaq*, *shâfâq* 'twilight, dawn, shining, brilliance' (Äzizbäy) occurring in *shap'akhini* later in the poem, T p. 2, lines 13-14. One would prefer *shap'agh-*.

¹²⁵ See p. 269 note 74.

¹²⁶ Gaysaryan, pp. 116, 265.

¹²⁷ Quoted and translated in full above, Chapter Seven, pp. 271-2. The poem contains the cryptogramme *Y A R A B*, Arabic *yâ rabb* 'O Lord God', of interest to this present chapter.

¹²⁸ H p. 235; A.K. K'och'oyan, *Sayat'-Novayi hayeren khagheri bataran*, Erevan, 1963, pp. 143-4; Shervinski, *loc. cit.*, p. 265.

¹²⁹ Also *Sultân Khaṭâ'î*, *Jân Khaṭâ'î*, *Shaykh Khaṭâ'î*, *pîrîm* ('my master') *Khaṭâ'î*, see T. Gandjei, 'Pseudo-Khaṭâ'î', *Iran and Islam in memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky*,

shah was not a member of the dervish Bektashi order, founded in Anatolia in 1327, Islamic scholars find it natural that he should 'take refuge in the spirituality of Hâjjî Bektash and compose poems in the spirit of Bektashî poetry'. The spiritual importance of the shah's poems is such that to the present day, 'in Anatolia, in 'Alavî circles whenever a poem bearing the *takhalluṣ* Khaṭâ'î is recited, the women stand up and the men kneel'. Some poems in the oldest extant *Dîvân* of AD 1541 contain such daringly extreme statements, which other Muslims would find blasphemous, as 'I am the absolute Truth' and 'I am God's eye (or God himself) ... I am the absolute doer'. These sentiments are paralleled by Sayat'-Nova 'They said, Shâh Khatâ'î, Creator of the whole world, you made the world out of nothing, Creator of Everything ... I have opened the door of Truth ... Everyone who says "You are the Truth", he becomes be a Bâb for me'.¹³⁰ Was, then, Sayat'-Nova thereby professing allegiance to a Muslim sect? Is he sincere in calling *Shakhkhat'ay* his *ustâd* (master) and *pîr* (teacher)? There could have been political reasons for eulogizing Shâh Ismâ'îl, whose dynasty appointed the Georgian rulers of Tiflis, the Mukhranian Bagratids, who professed Islam and may have been, as Allen sees them, 'Isfahani grandees first and Kings of K'art'li afterwards',¹³¹ until the Safavids were overthrown by the Afghan Nadir in 1722. A time of troubles began in Georgia until the Kakhian T'eimurazi II was appointed King of K'art'li and his son Irakli King of Kakhet'i by Nâdir Shâh in 1744. Thus the Georgian court during Sayat'-Nova's childhood, youth, and early manhood was Muslim. And the milieu in which he practised his craft and sang the majority of his songs in Azeri was almost exclusively Muslim. He could hardly have escaped the influence of Islam, and many of his poems, in particular the more mystic, bear witness to this. Up to a point, it is perhaps natural for him also to 'take refuge in the spirituality of Hâjjî Bektash'. But he was nonetheless a faithful member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, as he forthrightly declares in Azeri: *Saiat'nova dini sai: ink'ar etmaz, ermani dur* 'Consider Sayat'-Nova's

ed. C.E.Bosworth, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1971, p. 265; Two Turkish poets used the pen-name *Khaṭâ'î*, but the Turkish scholar Sadeddin Ergun dismisses them as authors of poems in the *Hatayî Divanı* he attributes to Shâh Ismâ'îl (*Hatayî Divanı, Şah İsmail-i Safevi, hayatı ve nefesleri*, Istanbul, 1946. This reference and the details concerning Shâh Ismâ'îl that follow above are taken from Dr. Gandjei's article, pp. 263-266. The poems attributed to the shah have been edited also by Azizaga Mamedov, *Şah İsmail eserleri*, Baku, 1966.

¹³⁰ See above, Chapter Seven pp. 271-272.

¹³¹ Allen, p. 176.

religion: there is no denying it, it is Armenian'.¹³² Although, therefore, it can be a dangerous game to play, Muslims being uninclined to release on pain of death anyone from their faith who has once adopted it, and not over-indulgent to those who trifle with it,¹³³ Sayat'-Nova's religious *Shah-Khat'ay* is almost certainly an exercise in what he considered ghazal form, for the benefit of his Azeri Muslim audience, not without a certain degree of religious sincerity. The danger of fanatical retribution was in any case less in predominantly Christian Tiflis, where the Georgian Muslim rulers protected the Church, than in areas where Muslims were in the majority. Moreover, the mystic, not altogether orthodox Muslims who, like for example Jalâl ed-Dîn Rûmî and Omar Khayyâm, displayed great sympathy with the teachings and personality of Jesus, recognised already in the Qur'an as prophet and son of a virgin, would hardly object to a Christian who showed something more than respect for Islâm. But that Sayat'-Nova did not consider *Shahkhat'ay* to be of exclusively religious significance is shown by his use of the term in a clearly romantic context: 'They say I call out *Shahkhat'ay*, king (son) of a king. This foolish heart of mine rises up, (and) falls into (love's) agony. The rose of your locks blossoms, it is (fragrant as) water-mint. Help! Barely have I glimpsed your brilliance. I do not know if it is the evil eye. Help!'¹³⁴ And if the *shahi shah* 'king (son) of a king' does not refer hyperbolically and by oriental convention to a female beloved, but to a male, then he is more likely to be Irakli, son of T'eimurazi, than Shâh Ismâ'îl.

¹³² *Tetrak*, p. 62.

¹³³ Muḥammad prescribed 'a great punishment' (*'adhabun 'adhîmun*) for apostasy unless by duress (*Qur'an*, 16,108), which has tended to be generously interpreted as the great punishment, the death sentence. According to the texts, there was no compelling reason for a Christian, as one of the People of the Book, to convert to Islam, though Sayat'-Nova's own reported martyrdom (and those who think this a legend can find many examples elsewhere) would show that this concession was not universally honoured. Palgrave, travelling in 1862 to the strict Wahhâbi centre of the Arabian peninsular disguised as a Christian doctor from Beirut, held there to be no danger in being known for a Christian outside the forbidden areas of Mecca and Medina as long as one was not recognised as a European, though Doughty, provocatively travelling as both a Christian and a European in the same area in 1876, though coming close to martyrdom in straying too close to the forbidden areas, did, canonically, survive. Burckhardt (1809) and Burton (1853), whose aim was precisely to visit Mecca, boldly disguised themselves as Muslims, and doubtless owed their survival after the publication of their travel-books to the fact that Muslims were in their day not so strongly represented in Europe and within reach of a *fatwah* as now. A perceptive discussion of these travellers' relationship with Islam is presented by Kathryn Tidrick's *Heart-beguiling Araby, the English romance with Arabia, with a foreword by Albert Hourani*, Tauris: London, 1981.

¹³⁴ See above, pp. 355-6.

Armenian *Khat'ay* for Cathay or China occurs in 17th and 18th century New Julfa merchants' contracts.¹³⁵ The Emperor of that vast and ancient land must have been the most powerful monarch the minstrel and others in Tiflis could conceive,¹³⁶ and as such could be used symbolically for God (the King of Kings), and also for the beloved, who is not only referred to as 'autocrat and king' (*ink'nakal t'ak'avur*) in the Armenian *Shahkhat'ay* poem *Shat sirun is*¹³⁷ or called 'the Peacock Throne bequeathed by King Chosroes itself',¹³⁸ but is specifically called 'the sister of the emperor of China and Central Asia (*ch'in mach'inis khelmtsip'is das amboben, martalia*)¹³⁹ while her mole in a light-hearted Azeri song is called 'the sultan of China' (*ch'in-sult'ani*).¹⁴⁰ Originally from Chinese *K'itan*, the name of a Tungus tribe that conquered Northern China in the 10th century, via Uigur *Kytai*, etc., the term *Kitai*, *Cataya*, *Cathaya*, *Khitai*, *Khata*, was wellknown in Europe from the 13th century, and was 'the name by which for nearly 1000 years China has been known to the nations of Inner Asia and to those whose acquaintance with it was got by that channel'.¹⁴¹ In Russia *Kitai* for China was current since the 15th century.¹⁴² Its size and the fact that it was subject to one ruler impressed Friar Jordanus ca. 1330: 'Cathay is a very great Empire, which extendeth over more than 100 days' journey, and it hath only one lord.'¹⁴³ *Cataian* is attested in England in 1599/60 as

¹³⁵ See e.g. Edmund Herzig, *The Armenian merchants of New Julfa*, Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1992 (as yet unpublished). In Georgian *khat'aia* designates 'Chinese silk cloth' (Ch', M; Tsch as archaic), nowhere thus used by Sayat'-Nova. The alternative term for China (from Chung Kuo 'Central Kingdom') gives Georgian *ch'ini* 'China; Chinese porcelain'; Arm. *ch'ini*, probably borrowed from Turkish *çini*, refers, as in Turkish, not to fine porcelain, but to the cruder glazed pottery (Malkhasyantz').

¹³⁶ It is interesting that the Chinese Emperor still preserves this powerful aura in modern German consciousness. When confronted with what he considers to be an exaggerated or pretentious statement, a German may exclaim, 'Dann bin ich der Kaiser von China!'

¹³⁷ Sixth hemistich, T p. 102, H p. 102, translated above, pp. 269-270.

¹³⁸ *Khosrov p'ach'ayemen t'oghats, dun T'ovuzi Takht is, gozal*, in *Angin akën*, st. 2 v. 4, T p. 122, I fol. 65A, H p. 50.

¹³⁹ *Sop'elsa da sop'els shua*, st. 1 v. 3, I fol. 6, B p. 27 (translations, H p. 118, Lipskerov apud Gaysaryan, p. 118).

¹⁴⁰ *Bir khalun ch'in sult'ani dur*, in *Bari gal*, st. 4 v. 3, Ioane, fol. 35A.

¹⁴¹ *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, ed. and tr. H. Yule, London, (1871), 2nd ed., 1875, introduction, ch. ii, cit. *Hobson-Jobson*, a glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and of kindred terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive, edd. H. Yule and A.C. Burnell, (1886), new ed. by W. Crooke, Calcutta, 1990, p. 174.

¹⁴² M. Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 1953, Bd. I, pp. 562-3.

¹⁴³ *Mirabilia descripta* (ca. 1328), Hakluyt Society, 1863, p. 54, cit. *Hobson-Jobson*, ed. cit. *ibid*.

a characterisation of his kinswoman the “Illyrian” countess Viola by Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, ‘My lady is a Cataian’, which in the context could mean ‘autocrat’ or ‘allpowerful despot’,¹⁴⁴ as with Sayat-Nova’s ‘Emperor of China’. The latter term may also refer to the poet’s Georgian monarch and protector, Irakli II, whom he calls in fact ‘emperor’ (*khelmtsip’e*),¹⁴⁵ and who is possibly the brother of the beloved ‘sister of the King of Ch’in and Mach’in’ just mentioned. It is doubtful that he whom his contemporary Frederic the Great called ‘the invincible Heraclius’ had similar expansionist ambitions, but he would surely not have objected to a hyperbolic comparison with the ruler of the widest and most ancient still functioning empire on the face of the earth.

Dr. J.R. Russell has made a recent attempt¹⁴⁶ to explain *Shakhat’ayi* (he also ignores the full form *Shakhkhat’ayi*) as Arabic *shahâda*. There are several objections to this proposal which, in view of the matters of importance to Christian-Islamic relationships involved, are better not relegated to a footnote. APTAz *shahâdat*^{un}, *shahâdat*, *shâhâdât*, Armeno-Turkish *shêhadêt* ‘testifying, bearing witness to, especially the

¹⁴⁴ *Twelfth Night*, ii. 3: Sir Toby: ‘My lady’s a Cataian, we are politicians, Malvolio’s a Peg-o’-Ramsey, and “Three merry men be we”. Am I not consanguineous? Am I not of her blood? Tilly-vally — “lady”! “There dwelt a man in Babylon, lady, lady!”’ This farrago is in response to the threat from Maria that her mistress would call upon her steward to turn Belch and his friends out of doors, and is probably a protest against high-handedness or capriciousness or ‘cruelty’ such as Sayat-Nova levelled against his ‘merciless’ mistress. On the other hand, *Cataian* could be used, as an example of euphemistic homoarchê (e.g. *Golly!* for *God!*), in lieu of ‘cow’. Nares’ definition (*Glossary*, 1822), ‘sharper, from the dexterous thieving of those [Chinese] people’ (*cit. NED*, which gives the definition ‘thief, scoundrel’) will in no way fit Olivia’s character, and is an unlikely insult from an (even aggrieved) kinsman. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ii.1, Page, with reference to Corporal Nim, whom he has called ‘a fellow (who) frights English out of his wits’ and ‘drawling, affecting rogue’, says ‘I will not believe such a Cataian though the priest o’ th’ town commended him for a true man’; here the term must refer to incomprehensible speech, cauderwelsh, hardly appropriate to Belch’s use. The suggestion that *Cataian* means merely ‘inscrutable’, made by M.M. Mahood in his edition of *Twelfth Night* (Penguin books, (1968), 1986, p. 153) hardly fits the context. The notion of H.H. Furness (*ed.*, *A new variorum of Shakespeare*, vol. XIII, Philadelphia and London, 1901, p. 119) that *Catayan* is a retaliatory echo to the Viola’s maid’s criticism of his and his friends’ *caterwauling* is ingenious, but does nothing to clarify its meaning. But the word probably means as many things as the modern English would understand by *Chinese* or *Chinaman*, the highest common factor of which would be ‘strange’.

¹⁴⁵ *Khelmtsip’es veakhel utz’khod mort’uli* ‘I approach the Emperor strangely garbed’, *Samari’ali miqav*, st. 3 v. 1, B p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ ‘A mystery word in the early ghazals of Sayat Nova’, *Raft*, vol. 6, 1992, p. 21.

Muhammadan declaration of faith, ‘There is only one God and Muhammad is the apostle of God’ [*Lâ ilaha illâ ʾl-Lâh wa Muḥammadu rasûlu-ʾl-Lâhi*] (mostly used in the dual *shahâdatain* “the two testimonies”), martyrdom’ (Steingass) is pronounced in Persian, Azeri and Armeno-Turkish with the final *-t* (*tâ-i marbûṭa*), so that the Azeri accusative singular (Russell: ‘here *-yî*, producing the phrase “By the *Shahâda!*”’) is not **shahâdayî*, but *shâhâdâti*. Also, APTAz *h* (and *ḥ*, pronounced the same as *h* in Persian, Azeri, Armeno-Turkish, and Georgian and Armenian loans) are represented by Armenian and Georgian *h*, not *kh*, and APTAz initial and medial *-d-* by Armenian and Georgian *-d-*, not *-tʼ-*.¹⁴⁷ Although Dr. Russell interprets the phrase as the Muslim declaration of faith, he has difficulty in explaining why Sayatʼ-*Nova* should say it, conjecturing only that ‘for Sayat Nova, the Moslem profession of faith seems to afford magical protection against Eros — at least to those who can say it without abjuring their own faith’. But it is axiomatic that, in Muslim eyes, there just is no-one who can say the formula without abjuring his previous faith. Dr. Russell advances the imaginative theory that Sayatʼ-*Nova* loved a Muslim woman, which, though there is no evidence for it, is not impossible; that he should feel in need of an apotropaic formula, however, does seem improbable, and that he should think of using the Muslim profession of faith as such is quite impossible. Dr Russell comments that ‘in solving one mystery, one has, perhaps,

¹⁴⁷ As in *shahi shah*, *gahi gah*, *darda*, in the Azeri poem quoted above p. 355; *kh* in *ghalkhar*, *shapakhini* there represents *q*. Dr. Russell’s statement that ‘the phonology of the Armenian rendering (of *Shakhatʼayi*) presents no problem [since] Sayat Nova wrote and spoke the Armenian dialect of Tiflis in which intervocalic *-h-* and *-d-* regularly became *-kh-* and *-tʼ-*’ (p. 22) is too dismissive. Whatever forms Kʼochʼoyan lists in the thesis cited (*ibid.*, n. 22) as occurring on the lips of characters in Sundukyantzʼs Tiflis plays (H. Adjarian/Acharʼyan, *Classification des dialectes arméniens*, Paris, 1909, in his description of the Tiflis Havlabar dialect, pp. 22-25 does not list a change of *h* to *kh*, though *-d-* has become *-tʼ-* in *vurtʼi* for *ordî*), Armenian *h* is preserved in Sayatʼ-*Nova*’s Armenian, and *h* for Azeri *h* and *ḥ*: in initial position, Arm. *hid*, Az. *husun*, Kʼochʼoyan, *Bataran*, pp. 110, 114; in medial position, Arm. *ahigh*, Kʼochʼoyan, p. 29, Az. *shêhar*, in *Doghru dur* st. 1 v. 2, above, p. 299; in final position, Arm. *mah*, Kʼochʼoyan, p. 123, Az. *sabah*, in *Bu dunia vaghia dur*, st. 1 v. 2, above, p. 309. Examples are legion. Dr. Russell’s assumption that *h/ḥ* can be represented by *kh* leads him to misconstrue *khar* (miseditied as *chʼar*), surely PTaz *khâr* ‘thorn, enemy, trouble’ (S), ‘thorn, shame, ignominy’ (Äzizbây), as though it were APT *harr* ‘hot, boiling’, APTAz *harârat*, *hârârât* ‘heat’: ‘You are so lovely, but cannot burn the *Shakhatayi*-sayer’ (p. 20); for a correct translation, see above, p. 269. The representation of Azeri final *-d* as *-tʼ-* (e.g. *madatʼ* ‘help’ for APTAz *madad*, *mädäd*, in *Dedilar kʼi shakhkhatʼayi*, couplet 2, vv. 1-2, T p. 2, above, p. 355), is significant in view of the *sayyad/Sayatʼ* equation (see above, pp. 71, 338).

opened another' (p. 23). He has solved no mystery, however, and it would be more pertinent to suggest, with respect, that one error leads to another. Armeno-Turkish *shêhadêt' êt'mêk'* 'bear witness' is used with reference to the Christian faith, as repeatedly at *John*, 1,7-8.¹⁴⁸ Dr. Russell is undoubtedly correct in assuming that a '*shahâdat*-sayer' would be one who openly professed the Muslim faith. Despite his respect for the higher forms of Islam in his Azeri *ilahî-s* already noted, Sayat'-Nova could never have uttered this binding formula, tantamount to 'turning Turk' (*tachkanal*), he who has declared clearly in Azeri that his religion is undeniably Armenian Christian, and who is reported to have died for his faith rather than, as he is said to have declared, also in Azeri, abandon the Church and Jesus¹⁴⁹ in surrendering to the unlawful summonse by Agha Mahmad Khan's Persian marauders to convert to Islam. And everyone in that part of the world would have known of the mortal danger of subsequently reneging on such a profession of faith: no Muslim doctor would consider a Christian returning to the faith of his fathers to be one 'forced against his will but whose heart remained firm in the faith' exempted by Muḥammad from the severe penalty for apostasy:¹⁵⁰ things do not work that way round.

In this section one has dealt principally with puns, and it is just possible, though I do not think it probable, since the phonetics are so divergent, that some Azeri listeners may have glimpsed *shâhâdâti* behind *Shahkhatayi* (*Shâh-i Khaṭâ'i*). A more probable wordplay, one relevant to the use of the term with reference to God, might be on **Shâh-i Khodâi* "Divine King". This recalls the manner in which Ḥâfîz plays on AP *Khaṭâ* 'Cathay' and *khaṭâ* 'fault, trespass, crime unintentionally committed': 'I wish from the locks of the beloved to release musk; there is (in me) the remote idea that I might see Cathay [the source of musk] (or a lapse [on her part advantageous to her lover])'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ *ishbu adêm shêhadêt' ichün gêldi, t'a k'i Nurën hakkênda shêhadêt' êt'mêsiyle, jümlê adêmlêr anên vasêt'asêylê imana gêlêlêr. K'êndisi ôl Nur ôlmayêb, anjak Nur hakkênda shêhadêt' êt'mêk' ichün idi* ('*Ahdê jedid, ya'ani Injili Shêrif*, American Bible Society, Beirut, 1926), done on the Greek οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσι δι' αὐτοῦ. Οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός. Arm. *Sa ekn i vkayut'iwn zi vkayesc'ê vasn Lusoyñ, zi amenek'in hawatesc'en novaw. Oč' êr na Loysén, ayl zi vkayesc'ê vasn Lusoyñ*. Only the latter text would have been familiar to the Eastern Armenian Sayat'-Nova.

¹⁴⁹ See above, p. 37.

¹⁵⁰ See above, p. 358, n. 133. The Qur'anic verse reads: *man kafara bi'llâhi min ba'di 'îmânihi 'illâ man 'ukriha wa qalbuha muṭma'inn^{um} bi'l-îmâni ..* (16,108).

¹⁵¹ *Kh'âham az zulf-i butân nâfa^h-gushâ'i kardan; fikr-i dûr ast hamânâ ki khaṭâ mîbînâm*, in *Nûr-i Khodâ* 'The Light of God', ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 33, v. 3, p. 66;

In this chapter one has been very critical of Sayat'-Nova's standards of literacy, as one is compelled to be in matters alphabetical. A critic would have considerably less to say about the literacy of, say, the poet Milton, and would probably find that the learning of Cromwell's Latin secretary was in that respect far in advance of a product of 20th century schools. Sayat'-Nova did not know the advantages of a grammar school or university education. But despite his lack of formal education, there is no doubt that he was a greater master of language than any modern critic is likely to be. And where is the modern poet who can compose haunting songs in the languages of three cultures who, while this is being written (1995), are at each others' throats?

When one has spent months and years studying the works of a poet, one finds that ideas occur to one concerning their interpretation that do not seem to come from within oneself. It is as though the departed poet is whispering in your ear. Sayat'-Nova would not be one to let this opportunity pass. What does he say, or, since the present writer is more materialist than spiritualist, would he say if this feeling were not imagination? 'You have been very critical of my Azeri alphabetic poems', he says. 'You sit there in your Oxford ivory tower surrounded by Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Azeri, Armenian and Georgian dictionaries, and with the works of Sappho, Homer, Horace, Ovid, Hâfiz, Âsim Effendi, etc., at your elbow. All right. I admit that my literacy in Islamic languages has its faults. But not many of my Azeri audience knew as much about the Arabic alphabet as they do now: ask them. And has it occurred to you that you might be taking it all too seriously. I have confessed to being something of a joker, and you have some poems to prove it. In English I might be capable of saying S for Psalm, and N for Know, for comic effect. Somehow I have the feeling you are telling me what I ought to have done. But here's my saz. Let's hear you play a tune on it, and sing some songs in four languages that people will remember two and a half centuries later, perhaps for all time, or as long as there is an Armenian or Georgian or Azeri language. Oh, you are a beginner¹⁵², and your

'Cathay was the famous country for musk, won from the pod [*nâfa^h*] of the musk-deer'. His verse translation, p. 117, is particularly felicitous: 'Combed from the fair one's tresses / I win sweet musk today. / But ah! the distant fancy / That I should gain Cathay!' See above, p. 271, n. 83.

¹⁵² No doubt delicacy restrained the poet from citing the Turkish proverb *kırkında* (*sekseninde*) *saz öğrenen Kiyamette çalar* 'He who begins to learn the saz at forty (more generous *var.* eighty) will play it at the Resurrection' (Metin Yurtbaşı, *Türkisches Sprichtwörterlexicon*, Ankara, 1994, pp. 10, 356).

voice is not much good, and you can never remember the words of a song right through? It looks as though some modesty is called for. And I never insisted that you should study my songs. Indeed, if you do not appreciate them, I would ask you to leave them alone, and stick to my good friends Shakespeare and Keats'.

And off the old minstrel went, humming *Me khosk unim* 'I have a word to say'. And had said it.

PLATE F



A Georgian Royal Beauty

T'amara, otherwise Vardisp'era 'Rose-face', Queen of T'eimurazi I (1589-1663), as drawn by Castelli between 1628 and 1654 (see above, Chapter Eight, p. 326 n. 70).

The Latin inscriptions relate how Shah Abbas II, wishing to possess her and being refused by T'eimurazi, sent an army to lay Georgia waste. An inscription on the next plate calls her the most beautiful of all human creatures, whose beauty brought misfortune to her country, so that she might with reason be called a new Helen.

The ornate characters at the top of the plate seem to read, the first in the characters of what Giorgadze calls 'a new alphabet elaborated by Castelli' (note to pl. 512/513), otherwise grotesquely distorted *mkhedruli* T'em(a)ri..., the second in Greek, *Theas...* 'of the goddess', the latter anticipating the Italian inscription in the bottom right corner of the portait, *La Dea dell'Iberia seu Georgia*.

CHAPTER NINE

EROS

Sayat'-Nova was primarily a love-poet, a *Minnesänger*. It is a dangerous profession. *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, as he came to know.

What is Love? Love is desire (Sanskrit *lubh*). 'Love is a spirit all compact of fire'. 'Love's feeling is more soft and sensible than the tender horns of cockled snails'. Love turns the thickest blood to ether, the grossest thoughts to music. Its fruits are smiling babes with skin like peaches, nestling on a mother's breast beneath adoring eyes. But happy or unrequited, Love hurts. Socrates, the wisest of us all, in answer to a fellow Athenian's indiscreet enquiry, declared that freedom from desire (and Goethe and Tolstoi must have held him in this most fortunate, since he was a mere seventy when he died) was like being freed from a raging lion. There is no indication that Sayat'-Nova felt like that when at the age of some 47 he ceased officially to sing of Love, though it is likely that in the course of the thirty odd years he spent as a monk he came to feel a certain liberation, no doubt encouraged by his fellow monks, for the Armenian priestly view of passion is largely negative. We English have a habit of draining reality by the use of imperfectly understood foreign words, so that *passion* rarely conveys the idea of suffering still clearly at the root of German *Leidenschaft*. Armenian *akht* —though this word does not occur in the works of Sayat'-Nova, who uses *eshkh* (APT *'ishq*) 'love' and *dard* (PTAz *dard, dārd*) 'pain' to identify his sickness — is even more physically explicit, meaning, apart from 'passion', also 'illness, disease', vice, bad habit, menses, seed of man' (Bedrossian), which virtually echoes the 5th-century Palladas of Alexandria's view of the ugly scenario, dress it in silks and satins as one will, that Nature has evolved for human procreation.¹ Don Juan and Casanova were victims, not the active heroes they thought they were. The singing reed that the great god Pan makes out of a man suffers more than most, and the poet's destiny as the plaything of Fate was

¹ ἐξ ἀκολάστου | λαγνείας γέγονας καὶ μιαρᾶς ῥανίδος, *Greek Anthology*, x. 45.

well expressed by Sayat⁺-Nova's elder Ottoman contemporary, the Sheikhu-¹-Islâm 'Asim Effendi:

'In Past Eternity the High Council met,
And decreed, "This can bear Love's smart."
So in my breast a wild fire they set,
And said, "This is called a Heart."²

Sayat⁺-Nova is the Sheikh's spiritual kinsman. His main themes are those of the *âshiq* (Arm *ashugh*), one smitten by *'ishq* 'Love', that which turned the legendary ("7th-century") Arab Qais, lover of Laila, into the *Majnûn* or djinn-possessed madman by which name he was thenceforth known to posterity. It may be, as conjectured above, that Sayat⁺-Nova's often declared love was for a real person whose relations were as unwilling to countenance it as those of Leila. The Oriental lover dies a thousand deaths, and Sayat⁺-Nova can describe all the stages:

Akh k'ashelên sêrtis meçh'ên arunên merats gitenak'.
gishir tz'erek yari khat'ru jigarës êrats gitenak'.
anch'kês t'atz', beranës tz'amak', lizus hid k'erats gitenak'.³

'From much sighing the blood has congealed in my heart, may ye know!
Thinking night and day of the beloved, my liver is burnt up, may ye know!
My eyes wet, my mouth dry, my tongue is excoriated, may ye know!'

Since these lines belong to 1759, the final year of the poet's career at court, the hyperbole may well reflect a certain reality. These physical effects of love are wellknown in the West, thanks, in the literary field, to the most ancient and famous poetess of them all, Sappho of Lesbos of the sixth century B.C. It will not be irrelevant to the discussion of Sayat⁺-Nova's erotic imagery below to quote in full (or as much of it as we now possess, since of an erstwhile fifth stanza only fragments are extant), and that, as the rigour of comparison demands, must be in the original language:

Φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
ἔμμεν' ὄνηρ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδῃ φωνεῖ-
σας ὑπακούει
καὶ γελαίσας ἡμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν,

² *Encümen-i gâh-i ezelde, aşka kâbildir deyu / âteş-i suzan komuştar sineme. Dildir deyu* lit. 'At the assembly of the seat of Past-Eternity, saying "This is receptive of Love", putting a burning fire in my bosom, they said, "This is a Heart"'. Gibb, vi. 264.

³ *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, s. 1, vv. 2-4, dated 447 (A.D. 1759), T p. 127, H p. 75.

ὥς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὥς με φώναι-
σ' οὐδ' ἔν' ἔτ' εἴκει,

ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲν γλῶσσά μ' ἔαγε, λέπτον
δ' αὐτικά χρῶ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
ὀπάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἔν' ὄρημ', ἐπιρρόμ-
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,

καὶ δὲ μ' ἵδρως κακχέεται, τρόμος δὲ
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγῳ 'πιδεύης
φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὐτὰ

He seems to me equal to the gods,
The man who sits opposite you,
Very close, speaking sweetly,
And listens intently,

And laughs a seductive laugh, which
Makes my heart flutter in my breast;
When I see you but for a moment, then
The power to speak another word leaves me,

And my tongue quivers, a subtle
Fire suddenly runs through my flesh;
I see nothing with my eyes, there's a
Thunder in my ears,

And sweat pours down me, and trembling
Seizes all of me, and paler than grass
Do I become, and but for a hair's breadth,
It seems, I have died inside.⁴

⁴ For the text, see D.A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*, Loeb Classical Library, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 78-80, fragment 31. The Sapphic metre is faithfully reproduced by Catullus's version, *Ille me par esse deo videtur*, *Carmina*, 51. For an attempt to reproduce the quantitative metre by stressed metre in English and Classical Armenian, see my badly edited 'A metrical experiment', *Raft*, vol. 3, 1989, pp. 51-54 (and the essential *Errata* in vol. 4, 1990). The English version there reads (amending only 'poor heart' to 'mad heart')

He who by you sits there, no man, but godlike
Seems he by your presence, to me alone here.
Edging still more close, he devours your eyes, and
List'ning intently,

Laughs a love-sick laugh, that I well recall. I
Feel my mad heart flutter within my bosom.
Glimpsing you, sweetheart, but for one brief moment,
Dumbly I stand there,

Speechless: no word comes, and a subtle fire in-
Vades my veins, limbs, torso, all through my skin. My
Eyes can see no more, and a deaf'ning thunder
Roars in my ears.

Although one can never know for sure, since Sappho's ode, or at least Catullus' Latin version, may have made its way to the 18th-century court for it to be brought to the attention of the royal minstrel, it is probably a coincidence that the Greek poetess's image of one who sits with her beloved (κῆνος ... ἐναντιός τοι / ἰσθάνει, *ille ... qui sedens adversus*) is mirrored by Sayat'-Nova's *Modēt nēstoghēn ku harp'i, dun bang u boza is, aziz* 'He who sits near you grows drunk, you are bhang and intoxicating liquor, noble one!'⁵ Although some phrases recall Sappho's sentiments (*Me khoskēt var k'ura-k'ura* 'One word of yours is burning, a furnace, a furnace!'; *Êshkhemet hivandatz'il im* 'I have grown ill for love of you'), the poem is certainly no version of her ode. But in many ways Sayat'-Nova elsewhere reflects the torments of love of which she complains, and his poems give the impression of being an oriental commentary on hers. He, too, sees his beloved charming others:

Khani pes divan is anum.

*Shahzadi pes san is anum.*⁶

'Like a khan you hold court.

Like a prince you dispense honours.'

She turns everyone's head:

Êndu hamar k'u tesnoghēn ir chanp'emen ku molērvī.

*Ip' mētnum is mejlisumēn, shang shukhi-shabang is anum.*⁷

'Thus everyone who sees you loses his way.

When you enter the assembly, you spread beauty and joy.'

Her voice, like that of Sappho's rival, is sweet:

*Lizut k'aghtz'ēr, khoskēt k'aghtzēr, akērk'nirēt angin k'ar a*⁸

'Your tongue is sweet, your speech is sweet, your teeth are priceless gems.'

Here I lie, sweat-soaked, and I tremble, shake. All
Colour leaves my face, which is pale as withered grass. My
Body just lies there, for I've come within a
Hair's-breadth of dying.

⁵ I fol. 69, H p. 56 (who gives the date as chronicon 446, i.e. A.D. 1758, though noting, p. 246, that the 'original' is no longer extant; such datings are the custom of the *Tetrak*; Ioane gives no date).

⁶ *Angach ara barit'avur*, st. 3 vv. 1-2, T p. 104, H p. 12.

⁷ *Patkirk'ēt ghalamov k'ashats*, st. 2 vv. 3-4, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7. For the Persian loans, see 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, p. 34.

⁸ *Yar, k'iz iski zaval ch'ēli*, st. 5 v. 2, T p. 125, I fol. 64A, H p. 55.

*Khat'rov, khalov, k'aghtz'ēr lizvov shat indz pesin band is ari*⁹

'With your mind, your mole, with your sweet tongue, you have enthralled many the likes of me.'

*Lizut shak'ar, p̄roshēt qand, ak̄tek'ēt mark'rit alams ē*¹⁰

'Your tongue is sugar, your lips are candy, your teeth are pearls and diamonds.'

Sayat'-Nova's 'mad heart', his *divanay k'ovul* (Azeri *divanā könül*), the equivalent of Ḥāfiz's *dil-i shaidā* and Sappho's *μαινόλης θυμός*,¹¹ does more than flutter. The least it does is to grow weak in his belly: *Sirtēs p'urumēs t'ulatz'av*.¹² It is insatiable:

Hamasha, yar, k'iz id khosil im uzum.

Sirtēs ch'ē kēshtanum gap'ov, nazani.¹³

'For ever, beloved, I want to speak with you.

My heart cannot get enough of your conversation, gracious one.'

In a world of plenty, it is starved of the beloved:

*Ashkharēs ashkharov kēshtatz'av, im sirtēs k'iznitz' sov mēnatz'*¹⁴

'The world is filled-to-satiety with people, (while) my heart remains in famine (for want of) you.'

She wounds it,¹⁵ cuts it in half,¹⁶ brand it,¹⁷ slays it.¹⁸ It burns for love of her,¹⁹ it sinks in a ocean.²⁰ Blood stocks within it,²¹ it goes into mourning,²²

⁹ *Ēsor im yarin tesa*, st. 2 v. 3, T p. 110, H p. 26.

¹⁰ *Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi*, st. 2 v. 2, T p. 116, H p. 37.

¹¹ *μαινόλη θυμός*, fragment 1, *ed. cit.*, p. 54.

¹² *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, st. 2 v. 1, T p. 127, H p. 75.

¹³ *Dun ēn hurin is, vur gemi ku zavt'ē* 'You are the houri who seizes my ship', st. 2 v. 3, T p. 112, H p. 29.

¹⁴ *Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi*, st. 4 v. 2, T p. 116, H p. 37.

¹⁵ *sirtēs yaralu arir*, in *Hur is ēshkhov kērakats* 'You are a fire burning with love', st. 5 v. 4, H p. 74.

¹⁶ *Vakhum im, t'e serēt sirtēs kes ani*, in *K'iz saz gu k'a qumashēn*, st. 5 v. 2, I fol. 59, H p. 72.

¹⁷ *yari sirtēn dagh mi ani*, in *Angach ara barit'avur*, st. 1 v. 3, T p. 104, H p. 12.

¹⁸ *sirtēs p'urumēs spanetz'ir*, in *Khoskirēt malum im ari*, st. 7 v. 2, T p. 109, H p. 25 (cf. n. 12 above).

¹⁹ *ēshkhemet sirtēs ērvum ē*, in *Dastamazēt sim u sharbab*, st. 3 v. 3, T p. 117, H p. 34.

²⁰ *Akh k'ashelen sirtēs ēngav tsovatz'av*, in *Aib(ēb)imēn*, st. 3, v. 2, I fol. 59A, H p. 68.

²¹ *Sērtis mech'ēn arin mēnatz'*, in *Ēndur ach'kēs ch'ē tz'amak'um*, st. 1, v. 1, T p. 128, H p. 49.

²² *Sirtēs p'urumēs sēk'ur ē, al ach'kirēs latz' ē anum* 'My heart mourns in my belly [cf. nn. 12 and 18 above], my crimson eyes weep', in *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, st. 4 v. 1, T p. 127, H p. 75.

it is as troubled waters.²³ It needs to be governed, bridled.²⁴ Only his violin can make it merry.²⁵ Sappho indulges in hyperbole in imagining her rival as it were deified by the nearness of her beloved: but when it comes to hearts, she is clearly trumped by Sayat'-Nova.

For a moment, too, like Sappho, Sayat'-Nova finds he cannot utter a word, that he is tongue-tied:

*Lizvov ch'im kanatz'i asi, t'eguz khoskës p'ar unenam*²⁶

'I could not speak with my tongue, although I glory [*lit.* have PT *farr* 'glory, magnificence'] in my words.'

But here the second hemistich is most important, for, like Sappho, one cannot write poems about one's feelings and be silent at the same time, and Sayat'-Nova is demonstrably one of the least taciturn of human kind. It is true that he may, on rare occasions, consider holding his tongue: *Bernumës dënim sandz kenam* 'Let me put a bridle on my mouth and stand there (silent)'.²⁷ And, of course, to our great loss, once he had left the Georgian court in 1759, he said very little at all.

As mentioned above in the discussion on the Azeri poem *Hamasha ashughlar ghaybat'indaysan*,²⁸ the fire that suffuses the Oriental lover is not of the subtle (*leptos*) sort mentioned by Sappho, and one suspects that hers, at least in her youth, was not that sort either.

*Êshkhën var kërak ê, êrvelov gu k'a*²⁹

'Love is a blazing fire, it comes a-blazing.'

The beloved herself is fire, burning with passion:

*Hur is, êshkhov kërakats*³⁰

Although he may on occasion claim to utter no complaint, though with the implied proviso that his beloved is still willing to inspire him (*Ashkharumës akh ch'im k'ashi, k'ani vur jan is indz ama*³¹). Sayat'-

²³ *Sërtumët pëkhtur is, akhber*, in *Khoskirët malum im ari*, st. 9 v. 5, T p. 110, H p. 25.

²⁴ *Sandzaharim, sirtës varim*, in *Angach ara barit'avur*, st. 18 vv. 3-4, T p. 105, H p. 15.

²⁵ *Shat tëkhur sirt ku khëndatz'nis*, in *Amen sazi mech'ën govats*, st. 5 v. 1, T p. 134, I fol. 70, H p. 5.

²⁶ In *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, st. 3 v. 2, T p. 127, H p. 75.

²⁷ In *Angach ara barit'avur*, st. 18 v. 3, T p. 105, H p. 15 (see n. 24 above).

²⁸ Chapter Eight, pp. 319 ff.

²⁹ An *ögütlämä* (didactic poem) on the nature of love, st. 1 v. 1, T p. 113, H p. 30.

³⁰ *Khoskirët malum im ari*, st. 2 v. 1, T p. 109, H p. 24.

³¹ St. 1 v. 1, T p. 116, H p. 37.

Nova is not one to suffer in silence, and it is not Keats's 'sweet moan':

*Sirtēs yaralu shinetz'ir, êrvum im mērmējali*³²

'You have wounded my heart: I burn, full of groans.'

The 'burning lover' (Persian *sôz u sâz*) is a common-place in Near Eastern literature: in one Turkish tale the beloved has only to undo one button on her bodice for her lover to burst into flames and expire on the spot. In the course of his poetic career, Sayat'-Nova burns at least a dozen times, and he does not hesitate to use such imagery in a poem apparently addressed to Irakli II pleading for understanding, and which those who attribute unnatural passions to him may understandably seize upon as evidence thereof:

*Is khom ên gēlkhen êrats im, nurmekantz' k'abab mi ani*³³

'I was burnt up to begin with, do not roast me again!'

Do Sappho's eyes grow dim at the sight of her beloved? Sayat'-Nova goes blind in both eyes:

*Ov k'iz khayan mētik ta
Da'na erku ach'kov kur*³⁴

'He who sees you, traitress,
Goes blind in both eyes!'

His eyes weep blood:

*Sayat'-Nova asatz': Zalum, ach'kēs lalis ê arin*³⁵

'Sayat'-Nova has said: "Cruel one, my eye weeps blood!"'

Does Sappho break into a sweat? Sayat'-Nova melts away:

*Halvetz'a, mashvetz'a k'izid*³⁶

'I have melted, I have wasted away for you.'

Sappho comes within an inch of death. Sayat'-Nova dies a thousand. If he is not burned, he is drowned in a flood:

*Bas k'u êshkhin vuntz' dimanam: jurēn tanê Sayat'-Novun*³⁷

'How I can I withstand my love for you? Let the waters carry Sayat'-Nova away!'

³² *Dastamazēt sim u sharbab*, st. 3 v. 2, T p. 117, H p. 34.

³³ *Dun ên gēlkhên imastun is*, st. 1 v. 3, I fol. 64, H p. 20.

³⁴ *Khoskirēt malum im ari*, st. 3 vv. 3-4, T p. 109, H p. 24.

³⁵ *Dastamazēt sim u sharbab*, st. 5 v. 1, T p. 117, H p. 34.

³⁶ *Mejlumi pes, korav yarēs*, st. 3 v. 2, T p. 118, I fol. 70, H p. 41.

³⁷ *Patkirk'ēt qalamov k'ashats*, st. 5 v. 3, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7.

He is a willing victim:

*Êshkhemet andanak êla, êk, mort'ê, jallat'ên dun is*³⁸

'I emerged from love (slain) without a knife. Come, slaughter me, you are the executioner!'

But the Oriental lover is ever ready to die for his beloved, *pro forma* at least. *Qurbânat bi-gardam* 'May I be a sacrifice for you', say the Persians, *Kurban olayım*, 'idem' say the Turks, which Hony appropriately reduces in scale, rendering its meaning as 'I beseech you!'³⁹ In a not too serious piece of (somewhat surprisingly) 1759, Sayat'-Nova uses the formula in a manner which suggests there is a life after death:

*K'ani vur jan im, yar, k'iz qurban im, aba inch' anim*⁴⁰

'As long as I live, beloved, I am a sacrifice for you, but then what shall I do?'

Similarly the refrain of a quintet of quintains of 1754, at first professedly indifferent to death in his beloved's cause, ends with a plea suggesting the lover is in no great haste:

T'ak' is mîrnim, dun sagh êlis, êshkhêt im girizman ê.

*Nazit mîrnim, naz mî ani, nazêt indz ku sêpane.*⁴¹

'May I alone die as long as you are well. Your love is my grave.
I die for your charm. Do not cast that charm. Your charm will be the death of me!'

Sayat'-Nova anticipates a death like that of Young William in the English ballad *Barbara Allen*:

Êshkhemên hivand pârketz'a, ach'kês chanaparin mênatz'.

*T'a mîra, izhum tis êkav, nazên beighrarin mênatz'.*⁴²

'I have laid me down sick for love of her, my eye remained fixed on the path (she would take).

Just before I died she came into view, (but) her charm remained ineffective [did not cure me].'

³⁸ St. 1 v. 1, T p. 126, H p. 54.

³⁹ Although the Georgians have a like idea in *sheni chirime* 'may your misfortune come upon me', i.e. 'my dear fellow' (Meckelein), and know APT *qurban* as 'sacrifice' (D. Ch'ubinasvili, Meckelein), in the Gurian dialect *qurbani* means 'an ignorant, uncultured fellow' (Tsch), probably deriving from its frequent use by local Muslims.

⁴⁰ St. 1 v. 1, I fol. 61, H p. 44; for *k'iz* I has *k'is*, H *k'i*, amended above, though the orthography may represent a colloquialism.

⁴¹ *Dastamazêt sim u sharbab*, stt. 1-5, vv. 4-5, T p. 117, Hasrat'yan, pp. 34-35.

⁴² *Êndur ach'kês ch'ê tz'amak'um*, st. 1 vv. 3-4, T p. 128, H p. 49 (who amends *t'a* to *yip* 'when').

There is in love-poetry, including that of Sayat'-Nova, a large element of insincerity: *âshiqliq*, 'the art of the singer of love', *Minnesang*, is a literary genre, with its own conventions, and passionate declarations of love, and readiness to die, are expected. No doubt the recipients of such songs knew this. How many Roses, serenaded by their Nightingales, might have said to themselves, had they known the German idiom with reference to hidden, ulterior motives, 'Nachtigall, ik hör dir trapsen'? In the literature of the Near East the woman rarely has a chance to comment on the attentions of her admirers. An exception is another Ottoman contemporary of Sayat'-Nova, the poetess Fitnet Khanım (d. 1780), who is reported to have refused to accept her friend the poet Hashmet's offer to be her *qurbân* on the grounds that his horns were defective (a reference to debauchery) and so unsuited to be a sacrifice, which had to be unblemished.⁴³ Such levity in the sphere of love is very rare in the East. George Wither's attitude to rejection,

*Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair? ...
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be?*

and Robert Browning's refusal to accept the end of an affair as the end of the world,

*All's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves,*

find no parallel in oriental literature. But Love is serious in the West, too. Eros and Thanatos are here, too, the tyrants of human destiny, and combine in the *Liebestod* of Tristan and Isolde. Many in Western society are the love-deaths, the suicide pacts of star-crossed lovers. Romeo dies for Juliet, Juliet for Romeo, Antony for Cleopatra, Cleopatra (after a little thought) for Antony. In Western literature it is preponderantly the woman who dies for love, Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, above all the literary ancestress of them all, Vergil's Dido. She it is who, as Mercury informs the lovesick Aeneas, is 'tossed on the changing surge of passion' (*varioque irarum fluctuat aestu*, Aeneid, iv. 564), whose nature is ever inconstant and unstable (*varium et mutabile semper femina*, iv. 560-570), as many centuries afterwards an Italian Tarquin

⁴³ E.J.W. Gibb, *op. cit.*, vol. V, pp. 152-3.

will sing: *La donn'è mobile qual pium' al vento*. She it is who is so dazed by her abandonment that she can find no words, does not know where she is, or what madness has seized her (*quid loquor? aut ubi sum? quae mentem insania mutat?*, iv. 595), and being a mere silly woman is filled with conflicting passions of love and revenge, unworthy of serious consideration by a Man of Destiny, who, though emotionally wounded, knew where his duty lay (*multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore, / iussa tamen divum exsequitur classemque revisit*, iv. 395-6). The Oriental Majnûn, Râmîn, Farhâd, dying gladly for their Laila, Vîs and Shîrîn, are made of less stern stuff, and glory in it. Sayat'-Nova is cast, or casts himself, into the same rôle or rôle model:

*Mejlumi pes korav yarës.
Leyli jan, man im gali yana-yana.
Êrvetz'av khuni jigarës.
Arni pês ach'ks ê lali yana-yana,
Yana-yana.*⁴⁴

'As with Majnun, my beloved is lost (to me).
Dearest Leyli, I walk around, burning, burning.
The blood of my liver has burnt up.
As with blood my eye weeps, burning, burning,
Burning, burning.'

That was written in 1757, and gives a light-hearted impression. But what of the final verses of the famous *Me khosk unim ilt'imazov* 'I have a word to say in supplication'?:

*Sayat'-Nova asatz', 'Zalum, is ên mahin mah ch'im asi
Hench'ak' êli dun verës las, mazët shagh talov, ach'ki lus.*⁴⁵

'Sayat'-Nova has said, "Cruel one, I shall not call that death death
If only you weep for me, letting your hair hang down around me, light of
my eyes.'

Is the poet really suffering, or are they merely words? They are written in 1758, and the trouble that led to his dismissal from court the following year is probably already upon him, and is in all probability of an amorous nature. We cannot know for sure whether his noble sentiments are sincere. But *si non è vero, è ben detto*. It comes near to out-Sapphoing Sappho.

All Sayat'-Nova's imagery is not so individual. He owes Iran a large debt. The common Rose and Nightingale theme, in which the

⁴⁴ St. 1, T p.118, I fol. 70, H p. 41.

⁴⁵ *Me khosk unim*, st. 5 vv. 3-4, T p. 121 (dated chronicon 446 = A.D. 1758), I fol. 67A, H p. 46.

nightingale, symbolising the lover, serenades the rose, the beloved, in his usually unrequited passion, the comparison of the beloved, in particular her hair, with the *sunbul* or 'hyacinth', the special attraction of her mole, are all Iranian. One might well feel that such images are laboured to death by Sayat'-Nova, but he has impressive antecedents. Hâfiz devotes a whole *ghazal* to the Rose and Nightingale theme, the amorous nightingale being there represented as typically frustrated:

*Gul yâr hasan gashteh va bulbul qarî-i 'ishq,
ân-râ tafazzulî na va ân-râ tabaddulî*

'The Rose was a beautiful beloved and the Nightingale devoted to her love,
But she showed him no favour, and he could not transfer (his affections),'

and has many other passages devoted to this theme.⁴⁶ And to the others: 'In the Paradise Garden yesterday when by the grace of the air your hyacinth locks was stirred by the morning breeze'; 'The wind on the head of the Rose parts her hyacinthine locks, when from the middle of the garden the scent of her locks rises'⁴⁷; 'May the evil eye remain far from thy Mole, for on the beautiful chequer-board (of the heavens) this moves the pawn that wins the game from the Moon and the Sun'.⁴⁸ Such conceits were known to the inhabitants of Tiflis before Sayat'-Nova's day, for example in the poetry of Hovnat'an Naghash, who, however, though he compares his beloved with the Rose, is not so ready to play the rôle of the Nightingale himself, attributing the melodiousness of its voice to the beloved herself; and when he is the Nightingale, he says so in an otherwise Armenian poem in Azeri, giving the impression of a quotation.⁴⁹ And, as we shall see below, the Georgians had long been

⁴⁶ Ed. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 44, p. 75. The play on *tafazzul* and *tabaddul* will be noted as clever. To show how often the Rose and Nightingale theme occurs in even a poet as versatile as Hâfiz, one may find the following in Arberry's small selection of fifty *ghazals*: 'The red Rose has blossomed and the Nightingale is intoxicated (by her beauty' (p. 44); 'Again from the branch of the tall cypress the patient Nightingale sang his song, that the evil eye should stay away from the face of the Rose' (i.e. might be decoyed to himself) (p. 60); 'As proud of her own beauty and youth and that she had enjoyment from the Nightingale of a thousand melodies (*dil-i bulbul-i hâzâr gûna^h*)' (p. 62; the translation of E.H. Palmer, p. 112, is wrong, since it is the Rose of Sûr, the damask rose, that shines in the night as bright as a torch, that is proud of its youth and beauty, and certainly not the Nightingale which, being a fairly drab bird, could not, and never in man-made compositions does (what he says to the female at mating time is another matter), boast of his beauty. See Addenda, p. 455.

⁴⁷ Arberry, no. 11, p. 47; no. 23, p. 58.

⁴⁸ Arberry, no. 39, p. 72.

⁴⁹ *Lezud k'aghtz'rakhôs hazaran bêlbul* 'Your tongue speaks sweetly, thousand-voiced nightingale', *Afawôtutz' mēk mi tesay zardarats*, st. 5 v. 1, ed. A. Mnatz'akanyan,

introduced to Persian themes by their own poets. Although, in the *Poem in Four Languages*, Sayat'-Nova composes a few hemistichs in Persian, it is very doubtful that he was directly influenced by Persian verse, other than indirectly via Azeri and Georgian. But he has abundantly absorbed Persian motifs, to the extent of using the self-same images. Like Sayat'-Nova complaining that the mole on her face and her hair conceal her full beauty,⁵⁰ Hâfiz regrets that his beloved's lovelock conceals the full moon that is her face with the words, 'Alas that you should draw over the full moon the polo-stick of pure amber!'⁵¹ Sayat'-Nova uses this very Persian polo-stick image to describe a curl (cf. the common Persian *chaugân-i sunbul* 'hyacinthine polo-stick' for 'ringlets of the fair', Steingass), borrowing the Persian word itself in a Georgian song: *zilp'i ch'oganis chirime* 'the sin of your polo-stick lovelock be upon me', i.e. 'I die for the same!'.⁵² He thus reproduces the Persian expression *tel quel*. It is worth pointing out that the stick referred cannot have been that ending in the T-shaped striker of the modern game of polo, but was more like a hockey-stick, as described ca. A.D. 1190 by the Byzantine historian John Cinnamus, viz. 'a stick of moderate length which comes suddenly to a broad rounded end', though whether the middle part of this had to be 'closed by a network of dried catgut' in the original Persian game is not clear.⁵³ The Georgians would have had no difficulty in understanding the image, since the Persian word had entered their language long ago, mainly as 'racket', and those who knew their Rust'aveli would remember it from *The Man in the Panther Skin*, where it is mentioned as the racket used in the game of *burt'i* or 'ball', which was probably different from polo in being played on foot with a larger ball.⁵⁴

ed., Naghash Hovnat'an, Erevan, 1983, no. 23, p. 53; *Bêlbulam, dushmisham fighanay* 'I am the Nightingale, I have fallen into lamentation', *Haynetz'aw garun*, st. 5 v. 5, *ibid.*, no. 30, p. 64.

⁵⁰ *Eresit khalên tsatskum ê, mazirêt khap'ang is anum* 'The mole conceals your face, your hair forms a roller-blind (or snare)', in *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats*, st. 1 v. 2, T p. 129, I fol. 66A, H p. 7; on the meaning of *khap'ang*, see 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 32-34.

⁵¹ *Ay ki bar mâh kashî az anbar-i sârâ chaugân*, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 5, v. 4, p. 41.

⁵² *Ra ik'neba damidzakho*, st. 3 v. 1, B p. 45.

⁵³ *Cit.* Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, ed. W. Crooke, *Hobson-Jobson...*, (1886) 1990, s.vv. *chicane*, *chicanery*, pp. 191-2.

⁵⁴ Castelli depicts the stick wielded by the mounted Crown Prince Mamuka in *il gioco di balla* with a net on the end in the manner of a lacrosse stick (*op. cit.*, plate 37). The game was popular in Rust'aveli's day: *Vit'a ... moburt'alsa moedani mart'lad tz'ema, marjvel k'neva ... khelmarjvel stz'emdes ch'ogansa ...* 'May he (the poet) like the player

Hâfiz himself develops the idea of the concealment of the beloved's beauty with a suggestion that the lover should be grateful for the locks that partly conceal her full beauty as saving the lover from going completely mad with desire: 'I said to him (the taverner), "What is the reason for the beauty's lock of hair?"' He said, "Hâfiz, it is to prevent distress of the love-maddened heart!"'.⁵⁵ Sayat'-Nova does not feel himself so protected; he is resigned to going mad: *t'e tesnoghēt mek ēl tesav, divana dabang is anum* 'If he who sees you but once, you drive him mad and crazy'.⁵⁶ Sayat'-Nova's reading in Persian literature, even if indeed he *could* read Persian, which would not have figured in the syllabus of his village school on the Georgian-Armenian border, was not wide;⁵⁷ but even if he did know of these verses of Hâfiz, quoted, say, by an educated Georgian courtier, it is doubtful that he would have emulated the wit of the urbane Persian poet. As a lover, or as a professional love-poet, he would guard against any sense of humour jeopardising the high seriousness, real or feigned, of his deep passion.

of *burt'i* (ball) in the arena accurately and skilfully progressing ... adroitly aim the *ch'ogan*', *Vep'khistaqasani*, ed. Shavishvili, st. 13 vv. 1-2, st. 14 v. 4). Wardrop states (p. 4 n. 5) that the modern game is played with both hands and feet. The ball is of leather, about the size of a football'. This seems to describe a game played on foot, so that one wonders whether there is a confusion here with the ball-game *lelo(burt'i)*. Tschenkeli defines *ch'ogant'urt'i* as both a game of hockey and polo (1. Schlagball; 2 Polo (zu Pferd)). The Byzantine form was played on horseback, introduced from Persia by the 8th century with the borrowed terms *τῦκανίζειν* and *τῦκανιστήριον*, but thence 'passed, as a pedestrian game, to Languedoc, where it was called ... *chicane*' (Yule, *op. cit.*, p. 190); the Georgian game was probably similarly modified, but doubtless directly from Persia. The *ch'ogani*, defined by D. Ch'ubinashvili as 'racket, fishing-rod', underwent a certain social decline in Georgian dialects, used variously for 'stoker's shovel', 'wooden ladle for maize gruel' (Tschenkeli, beside 'racket'), which may have affected its aesthetic effect on sections of Sayat'-Nova's audience. Connected with, possibly abbreviated from, P *chaugân* or G *ch'ogani* is G *ch'ogi*, defined as 'tennis-racket', used by the *ch'ogburt'ali* 'tennis-player', by Tschenkeli, but surely older than these definitions imply, linking up with Late Latin *chuca* (Ducange, 15th c.), Portuguese *choqua* (1516), *choca* (*a cavallo*, 1560), *cit.* Yule, *op. cit.*, p. 192, referring to the game of *chaugân* or 'horse-golf'.

⁵⁵ *Guftam-esh, silsile-yi zulf-i butân az pây chîst? Guft, Hâfiz, gila'yi az dil-i saydâ mîkard*, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, no. 15, p. 51.

⁵⁶ *Patkirk'ēt*, st. 5, v. 5, T etc., *loc. cit. supra*.

⁵⁷ What the German poet Friedrich Bodenstedt, who made a close study of the ashughs in Tiflis ca. 1850, has to say in this respect is most apt: 'Most of the Tatar and Armenian songs I encountered comprise clear unmistakable traces of the great influence of Persian poetry, in particular Hafiz, without the modern popular poets of Armenia possibly being aware of it. The songs of Hafiz have taken such deep root in Persia and inspired so many imitations that most of the sensual images and expressions are found in practically all Tatar and Armenian songs, though the Christian population of Armenia never actually studied Hafiz' (*Tausend und Ein Tag im Orient*, 3rd ed., Berlin, 1859, ch. 34, p. 343).

However pervasive the Persian influences on Sayat'-Nova were, many of his images do not derive thence. A common image in his verse is that of love for the beloved being vast as an ocean, with the lover nothing more than a helpless bark tossed upon it, in imminent danger of shipwreck. 'I am like a tiny boat, your love is an ocean, O light of my eyes'; 'My love has become an ocean, my ship is tossed about'. The Beloved is a siren bringing utter destruction to Love's mariners: 'You are the houri that seizes my ship'.⁵⁸ Hâfiz, landlocked at Shirâz, is an unlikely source of images connected with the sea. Typical more of a convinced landlubber than an old salt is that in which he seizes the opportunity to pun on a word that means, as English 'schooner', both a ship and a wine-vessel: 'Pour out a schooner of wine that we may make good our escape from that ocean with no shore in sight'.⁵⁹ Sayat'-Nova, a non-Muslim inhibited by no prohibition, finds no solace in wine. And when it comes to stately ships, that for him is a proud image of the beloved:

'With the wind blowing through it, your coiffure swells like a sail.
The world is an ocean, you are a ship upon it, you sway as you move from
side to side.'⁶⁰

This is less in the spirit of Hâfiz than in that of a poet whose work it is most unlikely that the Tiflis minstrel knew:

*But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth wilfully appear.
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride;
Or, being wrecked, I am a worthless boat,
He of tall building and of goodly pride.*⁶¹

Shakespeare, whose knowledge of sea and ships, witnessed in such works as *The Tempest*, was extensive, was the contemporary of Drake

⁵⁸ *Is me p'uk'r navi nēman, k'u ēshkhēn tsov, achk'i lus*, in *Me khosk unim*, st. 3 v. 4, T p. 121, I fol. 67a, H p. 46; *Deria olmish eshkhum, ch'alkeir novum*, st. 1 v. 1, T p. 73, H p. 223; *Dun ēn hurin is vur gemi ku zavt'ē*, st. 1 v. 1, T p. 112, H. p. 29.

⁵⁹ *Bedeh kashf-yi may tā kh'ush barânīm / az īn daryâ-yi na-paydâ karâna^h*, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 73. There are many such metaphorical usages (cf. Homer's 'winedark sea') in Persian: *kashf-yi daryâ-fishân* "sea-scattering ship", 'a wine-cup'; *daryâ-yi Başra* "the sea of Basra", 'a large cup filled with wine'; *daryâ-yi hāmila/shâ'ila* "a sea abounding in pearls", 'wine'; *daryâ-kash* 'a deep drinker (able to drain a sea)', Steingass.

⁶⁰ *K'amin mech'ēn antz' ē kenum, mazirēt yelk'an is shini. / Ashkhark'ēn tsov, dun mech'ēn nav — man is gali, lang is anum*, in *Patkirk'ēt*, st. 4, vv. 3-4, H p. 7.

⁶¹ *Sonnet*, no. 80, *O how I faint when I of you do write*.

and Raleigh, and came of a seafaring nation. How he acquired his maritime knowledge is unknown, but it cannot be a cause for surprise, no Englishman being born more than 80 miles from the coast. Armenians, however, having no coastline, are unlikely sailors: their generals are legion, but of admirals they have none. It is true that Tigran the Great, two millennia ago, extended his empire briefly to Ptolemais/Acre on the Mediterranean, but the Romans and Parthians did not allow him to remain there long enough to establish a navy, while Lake Van, though a goodly and often stormy stretch of water, could not train sailors who could negotiate Cape Horn. Armenian miniaturists manage tolerably well when it is a question of illuminating Pharaoh's army drowning in the Red Sea, or Jonah being swallowed by a large fish in the Mediterranean, but such scenes were as near as most Armenians came to the sea, and owe much to artistic imagination. The Armenians of Georgia, however, do have the opportunity to become acquainted with the sea, since their adopted country has a coastline to the north and the east, as Sayat'-Nova was, on his exile to Anzal on the Caspian in 1759, to find, more to his chagrin than any joy. The seascapes of the liveried court minstrel are unlikely to have been based on much personal experience. Nevertheless, water plays an important rôle in his imagery. When Grigor of Narek feels that he is drowning, it is in a sea of mud. Sayat'-Nova is swept away by water: 'My mind and thoughts are fettered by my love for her: know that I am carried off by water';⁶² 'I am submerged in the sea of her love: I cannot still the rolling-waves'.⁶³ On occasions the poet seems to have an eye for the effects of air and water that recall Turner: 'Falling like a cloud upon the sea, my bosom and my collar burst open'; that is, he disintegrates like a cloud that descends upon the surface of sea, lake, or river, which may have been the Black or Caspian Sea, Lake Van or Sevan, the River Kur or Araxes.⁶⁴ And there is one image connected with the sea or a lake expressive of the lost and unobtainable, that of the sunken monastery: 'I have been unable to achieve an entry, as into a monastery enveloped by the sea. My father confessor has abandoned me, I must weep for my

⁶² *Êshkhên ushk u mitkēs kapats, indz jēri tarats gitenak'*, in *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, st. 3 v. 4, T p. 127, H p. 75.

⁶³ *Dushtum êshkhun dariasina, dozmeiram langina*, in *Olam ayagha* st. 4 v. 1, T p. 38, tr. H p. 185.

⁶⁴ *Tsovēn ēngats ambi nēman doshs u yakhēs batz' ē anum*, in *Indz u im sirekan yarin*, st. 4 v. 2, loc. cit., n. 62.

sins alone'.⁶⁵ This is essentially Christian, unparalleled in Islam by any image of a sunken mosque. Of what particular submerged monastery Sayat'-Nova had experience, it is difficult to say, as indeed it is with respect to Debussy's *Cathédrale Engloutie*: but that is immaterial: it is a powerful scene that haunts the imagination.⁶⁶

As one would expect from an instrumentalist, many of Sayat'-Nova's images come from the world of music. 'You are a beautiful instrument, O commander of many lutes', he sings in Georgian.⁶⁷ And in Armenian, 'When you leave your dwelling, you tinkle like a chain of (golden) coins. What do you want with psaltery and fiddle, when in your (natural) harmony you resound like the Georgian lute?'⁶⁸ Hâfiz also holds music and the minstrel in high esteem, though wine and the cupbearer, always associated with them, hold pride of place: 'In the joy of the morning cup and to the sound of drum and harp, kiss the cheek of the wine-bearer to the tones of flute and lute'; 'Like Hâfiz, do not take the cup unless it be to the sound of the harp, for (the minstrels) have bound their happy heart to the silk(-en strings) of music'.⁶⁹

Although there may well be no direct influence of Hâfiz upon Sayat'-Nova, we have quoted extensively from this master of the ghazal as a

⁶⁵ *Mech'ën ch'im kanatz'i mëtni, tsovi tsatskats vank'i nëma. / Khostovanaherës hiratz'av, mighi hama im lali*, in *Êshkhëmet hivandatz'il im*, st. 4, vv. 3-4, T p. 138, I fol. 61A, H p. 52.

⁶⁶ For the mystically inclined, the image of a sunken cathedral or city can be of great significance. Of his experience of the Russian Easter in 1899, Rilke wrote (I translate), 'My whole lost childhood, drowned in the years of a frightened and confused youth, suddenly rose to the surface like a submerged city, and as I stood on the Kremlin with my tiny candle, the bell on the Ivan Velikii tower boomed out with such power and grandeur that I felt I could hear the heart of the whole country beating, a country awaiting its future from day to day' (*cit.* K. Asadowski (ed.), *Rilke und Russland Briefe Erinnerungen Gedichte*, Insel Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p. 22).

⁶⁷ *Khar turp'a sakravi, sazebiano*, st. 1 v. 1, B p. 11.

⁶⁸ *Ip' tighemet zhazh is gali, shëkhshëkhum is jighjighi pes / Inch' konis sant'ur k'amanch'en, zugsët ch'ongur ch'ang is anum*, in *Patkirk'ët*, st. 3 vv. 3-4, T p. 129, I fol. 66A (st. 3), H p. 7 (miswriting *inch' konim* 'what shall I do?' for T and I *inch' konis*). On Georgian and Persian loans, see 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 31-34.

⁶⁹ *Ba-nôsh-i jâm-i sabûh ba-nâla^h-yi daf va chang, babûs ghabghab-i sâqî ba-naghma^h-yi va 'ûd*, ed. Arberry, no. 22, p. 57; *Qadah maghîr chû Hâfiz magar ba-nâla^h - yi chang, ki baste^h-and bar abrîsham-i tarab-i dil-i shad*, idem, no. 13, p. 49. Other examples: 'Speak the good message from the musician and the wine', idem, no. 3; 'Let us drink wine from the goblet of the tulip as an imaginary beverage, far be the evil eye! for without the minstrel and the wine (*ki bî mutrib va mai*) we are insensate', idem, no. 35, p. 68. Hâfiz's musicians were, like his vintner, early risers: 'In the morning when still drunk from the previous night's wine, I took the cup to the sound of harp and seistrum (*ba-chang va châghâna^h*)', idem, no. 41, p. 73.

representative of those constant Persian themes to which the Armenian minstrel was certainly receptive. In any case, they had much in common, apart from technical mastery, though one has the impression that the 'love-sick heart' they shared was somewhat more resilient in Hâfiz's case, comforted as it was by copious draughts of wine, apparently eschewed by Sayat'-Nova, though he does, as we have seen, describe the effect of the beloved's beauty in terms of bhang and alcoholic drink. The difference in language, considerably reduced by Sayat'-Nova's many Persian loans, is not important. The Armenian wrote in his own language, Georgian and Azeri, and a few hemistichs in Persian. The Persian, as a *hâfiz*, one who could recite the Qur'an by heart, was steeped in Arabic, and was not ignorant of Turkish (though it was mainly the fabled beauty of its speakers that appealed to him). Persian, Arabic, and Turkish were in one respect synonymous: 'Turkish and Arabic are one and the same in this business, Hâfiz. Proclaim the message of Love clearly, in any language you know'.⁷⁰ Sayat'-Nova, it seems, was listening to the same inner voice.

Apart from the major themes of Persian poetry discussed above, Sayat'-Nova has frequent recourse to images deriving from details of events in Persian epic and folklore, as does Hâfiz, who in describing the tulip appearing in the spring to thrust its scarlet head through the desert earth, takes his metaphor from the story of Farhâd and Shîrîn, the hopeless lovers of Nizâmî's epic *Khusrau va Shîrîn*: 'Out of longing for the lip of Shîrîn still I see the tulip that blossomed from the blood from Farhâd's eye'.⁷¹ Sayat'-Nova frequently alludes to this tragic pair, and to other star-crossed lovers, like Laila and Majnûn, Gharîb and Shahsanam.⁷² His model of bravery is Rustahm son of Zâl, king of

⁷⁰ *Yakîst turkî va tâzî dar ân mu'âmalâh, Hâfiz. Hadîs-i 'ishq bayân kun bad-ân zabân ki tâ dâni*, ed. Arberry, no. 45, p. 76.

⁷¹ *Za hasrat-i lab-i Shîrîn hanûz mîbînâm ki lâle mîdamad az khûn-i dîdâ-yi Farhâd*, ed. Arberry, no. 13, p. 49.

⁷² The first form a *dvandva* compound *P'ahrad-Shirin* in *Ach'k u unk'ët*, st. 3 v. 4, I fol. 68A, H p. 64, and a song that begins with them and ends with Majnûn and Laila, is *P'ahradên mirats, Shirinn asatz' ... Mejlumi nêman man im gali, yaren êrvats im* 'Farhâd having died, Shîrîn said ... Like Mejlum I wander about, burned up by the beloved', I fol. 60A, H p. 65. Laila and Majnûn also form a *dvandva* compound *Leili-Mejlum* in *Shat mart' k'osê*, st. 1 v. 2, T p. 114, I fol. 58A, H p. 32, and figure separately by name at least in *Hëndkatz' k'aghak'itz'ên hanats*, st. 5 v. 2 (*Mejlum*), I fol. 65, H p. 63, and *K'ani vur jan im*, st. 4 v. 1 (*Leili*), I fol. 61, H p. 44. The last named figure in *Me khosk unim*, st. 4 vv. 3-4 (*Okhtên tari êl man gu k'am sazên dzirîs Gharibi pes / But'a Shahsanamês dun is, êl ch'unim och'ov, ach'ki lus* 'Seven years I wander about, saz in hand, like Gharib. My idol (of beauty) Shahsanam are you, I have no other, O light of my eyes', st. 4, vv. 3-4, T pp. 121-2, I fol. 67A, H p. 46.

Zabulistan,⁷³ whose steed Râsh ('Feather') is the symbol of grace and strength.⁷⁴ The physician Loqman is the archetype of all healers,⁷⁵ as Solomon is of human wisdom, he who is, for us, quaintly called *Soghomon dada* 'Grandfather Solomon'.⁷⁶

The following short poem brings together many of the Persian themes discussed above:

*Khabar gēnatz' Bulbuli mod, 'Vart'ēn k'u galun mēnum ē.
Chukhkēnirēn batz'ratz'il ē, veren shu'r galun mēnum ē.
Aravotutz' zangaki (pe)s kakhtz'ēr dzen talun mēnum ē.'
Bulbuln asatz', 'Ch'im karogh ga, puch'puches lalun mēnum ē.'*

*Vart'ēn asatz', 'Im bulbulin al puch'puchēn vuntz' kē khap'e.
T'e khilk' unis, qarib bulbul, ēl k'u bagh(i) chanp'en ch'ap'e.
K'ani guzē k'ēnats tighēn ur t'ēshnamin ku'rēn kape,
Ēli virch'um(ēn) meidan(ēn) Rostomi Zalun mēnum ē.'*

*Vart'ēn asatz', 'Khain bulbul, natal' ēt k'u eit'ibarin.
Antz'katz'av april amisēn, mēk ôr ch'ē hartz'ērir yarin.
Chet'ukh t'e murazin hasnīn, tes inch' arav k'avt'ar qarin.
P'ahradin k'ēlung ēspanitz', Shirin khanjalun mēnum ē.'*

*Ashkharumēn Vart'n ē ēli Bulbulneri sirekanēn.
Bulbuli lizvov im asum, 'Ter, pahe Vart'i nēmanēn.
Ashkharumēs k'ani sagh is, Saiat'-Novi gerezmanēn
Sha(h-Ab)basi lali nēman, vren galun mēnum ē.'*⁷⁷

⁷³ *Rostom-i Zal* (with the Persian *izâfet*), e.g. *Hēndkatz' k'aghak'itz'ēn hanats*, st. 1 v. 4, loc. cit., n. 72.

⁷⁴ E.g. *Krakē tsovenen dus ēkats, Râsh u jeyran is indz ama* 'Emerging fiery from the sea, you are Râsh and gazelle for me', *Ashkharumēs akh ch'im k'ashi*, st. 4 v. 4, *Tetrak*, p. 116, Hasrat'yan, p. 37; the same zoologically curious pairing is attested also in the Georgian verse *nadīrshi nak'ēbo Rasho, dzeirano* 'O Râsh praised in the hunt, O gazelle', *Khar turp'a*, st. 2 v. 1 Baramidze, p. 11.

⁷⁵ *Vi kena Loghmai hek'imēn, balk'am dardis ane ch'ara* 'May the physician Loghma(n) arise, perhaps he can devise a cure for my agony', *Ēskhemet hivandatz'il im*, st. 2 v. 2, t p. 138, I fol. 61A, H p. 52. Both the *Tetrak* and *Ioane* have the form *Loghmai* (amended by Hasrat'yan to *Loghman*), perhaps standing for *Luqmân-i ḥaqīm*; confusion with APT *luqmaḥ* 'tasty morsel' as in *luqmaḥ -i khalīfa* 'Caliph's bonne-bouche'(S) would be unfortunate.

⁷⁶ *T'eguz mētok' chartar ēli kantz' Soghomon dada ēli* 'Though one may be mentally more accomplished than Grandfather Solomon', *Angin akēn vēret sharats*, st. 4 v. 1, T p. 123, I fol. 65A, H p. 50. G *dada* 'grandfather' is the probable source here, but cf. P *dādân* 'title of the kings of Persia', S, though for *dādâ* he gives only the meaning of 'female servant' (cf. phonetically Georgian *deda* 'mother'). Hasrat'yan interprets the word as 'great craftsman (*mets varpet*), a very experienced person, ancestor, father, wise man' (p. 283).

⁷⁷ The text is taken direct from I fol. 69A, preserving some orthographical peculiarities, amending some Georgian letters to conform to Armenian, and adding a syllable here and there for metrical and logical reasons. Akhverdyan's version differs slightly, as does that of Hasrat'yan, p. 69, with its successful attempt to regularise the metre.

'News reached the Nightingale: 'The Rose awaits thy coming.
 Her little twigs have blossomed, she awaits thy converse.
 From early morn thy voice, sweet as a bell, she awaits.'
 The Nightgale said, 'I cannot come. The Tulip awaits my weeping.'
 The Rose said, 'My Nightingale, how can the Tulip detain him?
 If thou hast any sense, wandering Nightingale, come down thy (known)
 garden path again.
 However much one yearns to tie up one's enemy while he sleeps,
 In the end the arena still awaits Rustam son of Zâl.'⁷⁸
 The Rose⁷⁹ said, 'Treacherous Nightingale, a curse upon thy faithfulness
 (to the Tulip)!
 April and May have passed, and thou hast not enquired one day after thy
 beloved!
 She (the Tulip) will not let one achieve his (heart's) desire. See what the
 wicked old crone has done!
 Farhâd was killed by his chisel, and Shirin awaits the dagger!'⁸⁰
 In this world the Rose is still the beloved of Nightingales.
 I say with the tongue of the Nightingale, 'Lord, preserve the like of the
 Rose!
 In this world, as long as thou art well, the grave of Sayat'-Nova,
 Like (that of) the servant of Shâh Abbâs, waits for his King to come to it.'⁸¹

As we have seen, for Hâfiz the Tulip symbolises the tears shed by Farhâd for Shîrîn, and when he described it as having 'blackness in is soul and a heart of a thousand burns',⁸² that refers to mortification and suffering, not to any defects of its own. The Tulip is rarely mentioned by Sayat'-Nova, and when it is, it is placed among other flowers, and probably meant to be overshadowed by the rose: 'Let us sing a song: the tulips are in full colour, the rose has blossomed. The garden has filled

⁷⁸ I.e. 'Do not lurk like a thief in the night, but do the manly thing'.

⁷⁹ It would seem to be the turn of the Nightingale to speak, the Rose having spoken the preceding stanza, which suggest that a stanza is missing from this poem, which is composed of only four quatrains instead of the usual five. The missing stanza may have been a protestation by the Nightingale of his duty towards the Tulip.

⁸⁰ In the Persian legend the stone-mason Farhâd undertook to carve a way through the mountain of Bisitun for love of Queen Shîrîn, only to be thwarted by the agents of Shâh Khusrau, with the result that he took his own life with his pick.

⁸¹ This must allude to one of the many legends woven around the Persian monarch Shâh Abbâs I (1587-1628), the founder (not universally appreciated by the Armenian deportees) of New Julfa at Isfahân; two such legends may be found in Armenuhi Srapteryan, *Hay mijnadaryan zruytz'ner*, Erevan, 1969, pp. 258-9, but without relevance to the present passage. On Ioane's peculiar and probably anachronistic interpretation of these final verses, see above, Chapter One, pp. 44-45.

⁸² *saudâ' ba-jân va dil-i şad dâgh*, ed. Arberry, no. 29, p. 62.

with the hyacinth lily and the wandering nightingale'.⁸³ It is treated particularly harshly in the present poem by the jealous Rose, and one can but wonder what the Nightingale had to say in the probably missing original third stanza, whether, behind this seemingly traditional love-poem lay some actual romantic conflict, say between a wife (the Rose's 'wicked old crone') and a mistress. For it is not as though there were a dearth of poems by Sayat'-Nova with an often overt biographical content.

From the form of the foreign names in his poems it is clear that Sayat'-Nova knew of them from spoken rather than written sources. *Majnûn* appears as *Mejlum*, which must be a popular form. The mad dervish Buhlûl is *P'ahlul* for some obscure reason, perhaps connected with Persian *pahlû* 'profit, advantage', or *pahlav* 'a hero'. Farhâd is *P'ahrad*, in which the initial *p'* for *f* points to a Georgian source, for there is no *f*, which does occur in Armenian and Azeri, in Georgian — not that there is any sign of influence from Georgian literature: the heroes of *The Man in the Panther Skin*, Avt'andil, Tariel, P'ridon, are conspicuous by their absence.

Apart from Solomon, wellknown to Persians and Turks, and occasionally Cain and Abel,⁸⁴ Old Testament figures play but a very small rôle in Sayat'-Nova's imagery. In referring to the threshing-floor sold to David as an altar (1 *Chron.* 21,15 ff.), he names the owner, in the Armenian Bible *Urna* (A.V. *Ornan*) as *Urniel*, possibly confusing him with Ariel;⁸⁵ it would thus be wrong to infer from this obscure reference that the poet was deeply versed in the Old Testament. He is clearly familiar with the Gospels, the message of which he often recommends, though whole poems on a Christian theme are rare. His 1751 ode to the Church of St. George of Moghni⁸⁶ is unfinished. His Azeri-Armenian macaronic ode to the Holy Precursor is intended as a tribute to the patron saint of minstrels. His reference there (H p. 80) to the baptism of the Lord (*têr*) is the sole direct mention in his poems of Jesus, whom (out of respect, for his poems are prefaced by K' for *K'ristos*) he never calls by name, Hâfiz and Omar Khayyâm being less reticent. Sayat'-Nova gives the

⁸³ *Khagh kanch'ink' hangov, lalek'ên řangov, vart'ên batz'vil ê / Susan sěmbulov, gharib běľbulov baghěn lětz'vil ê*, in *K'ani vur jan im*, st. 3 vv. 2-3, H p. 44; I fol. 61, has minor variants and is unmetrical.

⁸⁴ *Khěmetz'ur dzerit t'asemen*, st. 3 v. 2, H p. 47.

⁸⁵ *Bedaslin vur khosetžēnis*, T p. 136, H p. 61, st. 4 v. 4.

⁸⁶ T p. 137, H p. 80.

impression, in inspiration and technique, more of an Azeri poet writing in foreign languages than an Armenian. This is doubtless largely due to the Tiflis society of his day. When, a hundred years later, the German poet Friedrich von Bodenstedt visited the Georgian capital and steeped himself in the local culture, it was as a Muslim poet, 'Mirza Shaffy', that he chose to masquerade. One imagines that similarly, when Sayat'-Nova sought to commune with the Muse, it was in Persian that she spoke, and her steed was not Pegasus, but Râsh.

The metaphors and images that Sayat'-Nova abundantly owes to Persia have been examined in depth, but like all good poets he conceived a large number of original and striking ideas that owe nothing to anyone else, as his sea images quoted above. He develops many variations on common themes. Into the stock Rose and Nightingale situation he brings a note of menace, and not merely of the 'no rose without a thorn' kind: by the Rose wooed by the Nightingale there lurks a hidden danger, probably a symbol of a rapacious gallant: 'I am the Nightingale; up to the Rose has crept a Hawk'.⁸⁷ When winter comes, love grows cold, and, in an image that recalls, but owes nothing to, Homer's generations of men as thick as leaves on the ground, and Milton's fallen angels as thick as the autumn leaves of Valderosa, 'The Rose Garden of Love is growing chill, the fallen leaves are without number'.⁸⁸ Many images are taken from the world of arts and crafts, as befits a poet who started life as an artisan. Apart from roasting him like a kebab in the fire of her love (*passim*), she may squeeze him dry as in wine-press.⁸⁹ Whoever built her heart (who but Him who forged that of Blake's tiger?), caused him to sink down as under the heavy beams⁹⁰ His own heart is plaited like wicker-work: 'To whom did I unravel the basket-work of my heart.'⁹¹ For him, representative of a nation that has produced so much fine architecture, and himself, counting as an Armenian, a Georgian, and an Azeri poet, by

⁸⁷ *Bulbuli var, Vart'sa epara Alali*, in *Song in Four languages*, st. 3 v. 1, T p. 52, H p. 229.

⁸⁸ *Eshkh gulustana donup'tur, varaqlari saisiz*, in *Olam ayagha*, st. 3 v. 3, T p. 38, reading *donup'* from *Az donmaq* 'freeze' rather than *dönmək* 'turn'; Hasrat'yan renders loosely (in Armenian) 'Love has a thousand flowers, resembling a garden', p. 185, which does not fit the pessimistic context.

⁸⁹ *K'ametz'ir êshkhî manganov*, in *Ajab k'u sirtên ov shinitz'*, st. 1 v. 4, I fol. 68, H p. 60.

⁹⁰ *Ajab k'u sirtên ov shinitz' khonaritz'*, (*h*)*iznitz' bedamagh*, st. 1 v. 1, *ibid*.

⁹¹ *Vis tsinat' gavch'are gulis khakhali*, in *Samart'ali miqav* 'Do me justice', st. 2 v. 4, B p. 17. The verse is strangely missing from Ioane's version, fol. 17.

his example bridging three often mutually inimical cultures, the artist is a builder of bridges deserving sympathy and support for his ideals: 'Mercy upon the old master, builder of bridges'.⁹² He conceives the whole world, or what we can see of it, in architectural terms: 'This world is a cage, I am sick of its (many) vaults'.⁹³

Many of Sayat'-Nova's images are very physical. The Georgian king may be preparing to shed his blood: 'Come, do not pour out my blood by the cupful!'.⁹⁴ Sometimes the physiology seems more psychosomatic, as when he laments that his sufferings have mixed blood with his mother's milk.⁹⁵ Particularly obscure is the passage which appears to describe what happens to the blood and seed of men and women before a soul enters the foetus (in Jewish tradition after forty days in the case of a male and eighty in that of a female): 'Until such time as the infinite (spirit) passes into the body, it wills that the rubies and jewels (the respective 'seeds') return to the mine'.⁹⁶ But one cannot be sure that one has translated it correctly, and not for the first time does the reader feel the force of another of the poet's powerful images, as with the famous 'Every man cannot drink of my water; it is a different water. Every man cannot read my writings: it is a different writing'. Lines, indeed, that seem to mock the recipient of the poem, called 'profoundly wise'.⁹⁷

Sayat'-Nova's imagery is devoted almost exclusively to praise of feminine beauty, and that of the female body above all. There is little reference to any positive spiritual qualities in his beloved. She is typically cruel (*zalum*), *sans merci* (*be-murvat*), she roasts him like a quail (*sirtēs luri pes khorvetz'ir*). Her purity consists in her fair form that seems limned by a draughtsman, in full colour. His metaphors, in which hyperbole plays a dominant rôle, may be compared with Eastern love poems such as the Hebrew *Song of Songs* attributed to Solomon, in

⁹² *Rahmat' p'ir ustada, k'(o)rp'i tik'ana*, st. 1 v. 1, T p. 43, tr. H p. 179.

⁹³ *Askharēs me p'anjara ê, t'agherumen bezaril im*, st. 1 v. 1, T p. 133, I fol. 63A, H p. 70.

⁹⁴ *Modi, siskhlsa nu damighvri t'asit'a*, in *Damekhseni*, st. 2 v. 1, B p. 21, I fol. 9.

⁹⁵ *Ch'unk'i qan qat'misham ol shirin sut'a*, in *Song of Four Languages*, I fol. 22A (st. 3 v. 3), H p. 229 (st. 2 v. 3).

⁹⁶ *T'a k'ech'masun ol lamak'an badana, istar donsun iaqut' gavar madana*, in *Naqadar k'i aslan t'ilk'ini basa*, st. 4 vv. 1-2, T p. 53, tr; H p. 180 (where it is mistranslated (in Armenian) 'If the pain pass not to the *vatan* [motherland, not in the original and annotated as meaning 'womb'], although they may make a mine of rubies and jewels').

⁹⁷ *Amen mart' ch'i kana khēmi, im jurēn jēren ê. / Amen mart' ch'i kana kart'a, im girēn urish gēren ê*, in *Dun ên gēlkhen imastun is* 'You are profoundly wise', st. 4 vv. 1-2, I fol. 64, H p. 20.

which the beloved, the Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley, is a garden enclosed, the plants of which form an orchard of pomegranates and all manner of odoriferous herbs and spices, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense and myrrh. As an orthodox Armenian Sayat'-Nova would have been well acquainted with the *Song of Songs*, and it must have been especially appreciated by him, since it was one of the texts that he copied, probably at his own choice, after exile from court, at Kakhi in 1766.⁹⁸ For Sayat'-Nova, too, the beloved is a whole garden of fair and fragrant flowers: (in Armenian) 'Thou art the rose and violet of the garden, the hyacinth lily of the hills';⁹⁹ (in Georgian) 'O rose and narcissus of the garden, O hyacinth lily of the hills'.¹⁰⁰ She wears flowers between her breasts, so that her lover needs no other garden than her, whose scent is of basil'.¹⁰¹ As this verse, and the initial verses of the preceding poem, in Georgian ('O one the buds of whose breasts have blossomed, in thy bosom thou art beautiful'¹⁰²), show, Sayat'-Nova does not shrink from referring to a main aspect of the female anatomy any more than the Hebrew poet does, though Arabs, Persians and Turks are reticent in this respect. 'In thy bosom thou hast a bouquet of roses, in thy mouth the tongue of the nightingale'.¹⁰³ He does not often achieve his desire: 'I have not attained the hidden treasure of the pomegranates of thy bosom';¹⁰⁴ and if he seems to, it is as something sour that does not belong: 'I am a foreign quince placed in thy bosom'.¹⁰⁵ The last four quotations are from Georgian, from which one might conclude that the poet felt less restrained in the language of the country that Sir James Wardrop entitled a 'Land of Women, Wine, and Song.'

Every coin has a reverse. There are in Sayat'-Nova's work a large number of ever-recurring phrases, clichés and verse-fillers. This is

⁹⁸ Matenadaran, Erevan, MS no. 4270.

⁹⁹ *Baghumēn vart' u manishak, sarumēn sēnbul susan is*, in *Ėshkhemet hivandatz'il im* (1758), st. 5 v. 2, T p. 139, I fol. 61A, H p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ *Baghshi vardo da nargizo, mt'ashi sumbulo susano in Kokobi dzudzut' gazrdilo, tz'urisagan lamazi khar*, st. 2 v. 2, B p. 43; I st. 3, v. 2, fol. 12A.

¹⁰¹ *Tz'utz'it mech'ēn vart', manishak, sēnbul u susan is shini / K'u terēn baghin inch' k'onē, k'u hutēn rehan is shini*, in *Patkirk'ēt*, st. 4 vv. 1-2, T p. 129, I fol. 66, H p. 7.

¹⁰² See n. 100.

¹⁰³ *Ubeshi gak'vs vardis kona, pirshi gak'vs bulbulis ena*, in *Kokobi dzudzut' gazrdilo*, st. 3 v. 2, B p. 43, I st. 2, v. 2, fol. 121.

¹⁰⁴ *Sheni ubis brotseulis namali ver mishovia*, in *Ra zarbabi*, st. 5 v. 3, B p. 48, I fol. 3A.

¹⁰⁵ *Ubeshi nadebi utz'kho bia var*, in *Aset'i tquli* 'Such a lie', st. 3 v. 2, B p. 41. The poem is not in I.

admittedly a charge from which Homer is far from immune, and Sayat'-Nova might have proffered an excuse such as one could devise for the Father of Literature: as a minstrel he was called upon to compose hundreds of songs. He had a lot to do, and in three main languages. Among phrases that occur *passim* throughout his *œuvre* are the following: 'Your face is sun and moon' (*êrest ê shams u ghamar*); 'I have grown sick with love' (*êshkhemet hivandatz'il im*); 'My heart burns for love of you' (*Êshkhemet sirtēs êrvum ê*); 'You have driven Sayat'-Nova mad' (*Sayat'-Novun junun arir*); 'Your hair is like basil' (*Mazirēt nēman rehani*); 'Son of Adam, drinker of raw milk, a curse on your fidelity' (*Hum kat'nakir At'ami zat, nalat' ēli êt k'u bap'in*).

One of the services for which he claimed particular credit in the poem he wrote in his defence to Irakli II was 'I come to you with Iranian ways' (*geakhlebi eranelt'a tsesit'a*), the implication surely being that these, presumably musical modes, forms of versification, poetic themes,¹⁰⁶ were new to the Georgian court. It is an interesting coincidence, stemming also from an awareness of his own worth, that Sayat'-Nova's remote predecessor Horace had made a similar claim of having introduced Greek modes to the Romans.¹⁰⁷ Whether Sayat'-Nova's claim to special knowledge was based upon personal experience, acquired, say, in the course of the journeys he had made in his 19th year according to his Azeri autobiographical poem, which may or may not be factual,¹⁰⁸ or personal study of Persian texts, which is very doubtful, it cannot be said that Persian culture was a closed book to the Georgians. It is safe to say that they knew rather more than the Armenians, for although the principal Persian epic, the *Shâhnâme*, had been familiar to some Armenian poets, e.g. Kostandin of Erzinka (13th-14th centuries),

¹⁰⁶ *Geakhlebi eranelt'a tseit'a* 'I approach you with Iranian ways', *Damekhseni* (Release me), st. 2, v. 3, B p. 21; *giakhlebi* [for *geakhlebi*, see Vogt, 2.95, p. 143] *eranelis tseit'a*, Ioane (*Dameskhnebi* 'I am overwhelmed'), fol. 9; H (Arm tr.) *Modēt gu k'am iranakan tsererov*, p. 128. *tses-i*, from Arm *tsēs* '(religious) rite', is polysemous in Georgian, meaning 'rule, prescription, usage, custom, rite, order, method' (Tsch *germanice*). That the poet felt the statement to be of special significance is indicated by the fact that semantics have priority over form, *tsesit'a* being only an approximate rhyme with *t'asit'a*, *p'asit'a*, *khasit'a*. The poet's inveterate punning prompts one to wonder whether the verb *geakhlebi* was meant to suggest also *gaakhleb* 'I renew/refresh you (with Iranian ways)', though the verse would thus need another syllable.

¹⁰⁷ *Humili potens / princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos* 'Risen high from low estate, (I shall be famed) for having been the first to adapt Aeolian song to Italian verse', *Odes*, iii.30, tr. C.E. Bennett).

¹⁰⁸ See above, Chapter Two, pp. 59, 63-65.

who records that at the request of fellow Armenians who had heard this epic recited aloud he composed an Armenian poem in what he claimed to be the same metre, this and other epics did not find many echoes in Armenian poetry.¹⁰⁹ Persian influence on Georgian poetry was much more profound and far-reaching. A Georgian version of *Vîs u Râmîn* (the *Visramiani*) has been attributed to the 12th century, possibly made by Sargis Tmogveli; the major Georgian epic, *The Man in the Panther Skin* (*Vep'khistaqosani*) is called by Shot'a Rust'aveli (12th-13th centuries) 'this Persian tale translated into Georgian', although no such Persian tale has otherwise been found, thus arousing the suspicion that a Persian origin was claimed as enhancing its cultural value.¹¹⁰ In more recent times, in the century preceding that of Sayat'-Nova, the Georgian king T'eimurazi I (1589-1663), had learned the Persian language and studied Persian literature at the court of Shâh Abbâs II, whose viceroy at Tiflis he was. He and other rulers of his family, the Mukhranian Bagratids, had for the honour of this viceroyship converted to Islam, of the Shiite persuasion, probably more on the principle that 'Paris vaut bien une messe' than out of deep conviction, since they were active patrons of the Georgian Church, appointing their relations, including the Catholicos Anton, to leading positions within it, and going into battle with icons and psalters as well as cries of *Allâhu akbar*.¹¹¹ T'eimurazi adapted into Georgian a whole series of Persian minor epics, *Joseph and Zuleikha* (*Iosebzikhaniani*), *Lailâ and Majnûn* (*Leilmejnuniani*), *The Rose and the Nightingale* (*Vardbulbuliani*), *The Candle and the Moth* (*Shamparvaniani*), all the characters in which occur in Sayat'-Nova's verse. A contemporary of his, Nodara Tsitsishvili, translated a poem celebrating the amorous exploits of Bahram Gur (the *Baramguriani*), while the *Shâhnâmeh* itself had been adapted by a whole series of writers between the 15th and 17th centuries, e.g. the *Rostomiani*, which ends with the death of Rostam son of Zâl who, with his legendary horse Râsh, is

¹⁰⁹ See M. Abeghyan, 'Shahnamayi otanavori ch'ap'ë hay banasteghtsut'yan mej' [The Shâhnâmeh metre in Armenian poetry], *Firdusi*, Erevan, 1955, pp. 117-128. How difficult it is to reconcile Persian quantitative metre into stressed metre is demonstrated by E.G. Browne's attempt 'to imitate as closely as possible the rhyme and metre (*mutaqârib*) of the original', *A literary history of Persia*, vol. 2, repr. Cambridge, 1977, pp. 144-5): only the verse 'The story of Suhrâb and Rostam now hear', if one is content to pronounce *story* as two long syllables, is close.

¹¹⁰ *Ese ambavi sparsuli, k'art'ulad nat'argmanebi*, ed. Shavishvili, st. 9 v. 1, tr. Wardrop, st. 16 v. 1; on the question of a possible Persian source, see Wardrop, pp. xi-xii.

¹¹¹ On the highly cultured Mukhranian Bagratids of Tiflis, see Allen, p. 176.

Sayat'-Nova's archetypal hereo. Translated into Georgian also by his time were Khusrau Pahlavî's *Khusrau va Shîrîn* (*Khosrovshiriniani*) and Navâ'î's *Farhad va Shîrîn* (*P'arhadshiriniani*), stories likewise well-known to our poet.¹¹² Whether he actually read any of these Georgian works during his schooldays at Sanahin one cannot know for sure, but it would appear that the characters of these Persian tales, thanks to the interest of the Georgian translators and adaptors, were as familiar to Georgian schoolboys as King Arthur and Robin Hood are to their English counterparts. Forms in Sayat'-Nova's work like *Mejlum* for Georgian *Mejnun*, and *P'ahrad* for Georgian *P'arhad*, suggest an oral tradition, but Georgian rather than Azeri. The claim by the Armenian minstrel that he had introduced Iranian ways into Georgia might have produced a wry smile from the Georgian king: one could hardly move for them. It is possible that Sayat'-Nova was referring only to Persian verse forms, e.g. the *ghazal*, and versification, e.g. *murabba'*. Few in Georgia would have denied the literary pre-eminence of Persia. Persian ways in the field of fashion were paramount, especially among the women ('the habit of the women is entirely Persian', Chardin). In other respects, Persian influence would not have been considered a blessing by everyone. Despite the Islamic faith of the Mukhranian Bagratids, who ruled Tiflis until 1724, when Sayat'-Nova was ca. twelve, Persian attempts to build a mosque in the city had been violently thwarted by the angry Christian populace.¹¹³ Politically, during Irakli's reign, Georgia

¹¹² For the Georgian works quoted, see A. Baramidze et al., *Istoriya gruzinskoï literaturî, kratkîi ocherk*, Moscow, 1952, pp. 28, 30, 49-51. Those of T'eimurazi I mentioned have been edited by A. Baramidze and G. Jakobia, *T'eimurazi Pirveli, T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli* [Complete collected works], t. I, P'ederatz'ia: Tiflis, 1934.

¹¹³ 'Though this city belongs to the empire of Persia and as well as the whole province is governed by a prince who professes the Mahometan religion, it has not one mosque. The Persians had indeed made use of their utmost endeavours to build them, but they have never been able to accomplish it; for the people immediately rose in arms, pulled down the work, and beat the workmen. The princes of Georgia were indeed glad of these seditions; for having abjured the Christian religion only to obtain the viceroyalty, they were not willing to consent to the establishment of Mahometanism' (*The travels of Sir John Chardin through Mingrelia and Georgia into Persia, in A new collection of voyages, discoveries and travels*, John Knox: London, 1767, p. 373). 'There are many bishops in Georgia beside the catholicos or patriarch. The prince, though of the Mahometan religion, commonly fills the vacant sees, and generally chuses his own relations' (*ibid.*, p. 371).

There is a further interpretation of 'Iranian ways' that could have been embarrassing to the King, i.e. that after the manner of the 5th-century theologian Eznik of Kolb, in whose 'Refutation of the Sects' they were especially associated with incest and other unnatural vices, charges against the Persians which were doubtless not extinct in Sayat'-

suffered greatly from her powerful neighbour to the south-east, and in 1795 Sayat'-Nova himself, if, as there is little reason to doubt, the tradition is true, was to die a martyr's death at the hands of representatives of a nation he had ever glorified.

Sayat'-Nova's word-play was not new to Georgia. T'eimurazi had a particular predilection for puns and ambiguities which may have had a direct influence on him: whatever he had or had not read in his childhood, it is very possible that Irakli brought the work of his famous predecessor, though of a rival Bagratid line and a Muslim to boot, to the attention of his court minstrel. T'eimurazi thus describes the content of his *Majama*, i.e. APT *majâmi'*, which Steingass defines as 'congregations', but which is used by him in the sense of phonetic patterns placed together in association to give different meanings — i.e. puns:

'In Persian they call this *Majama*, which may be translated as that which is conjoined,
Selected orthographies brought together as one.
Whoever may read and interpret them, his pleasure is not to be compared
(with any other).
And the heart that is a lover of wisdom will come to dwell with her
(Wisdom).'¹¹⁴

The following cryptic quatrain, in which the rhyme *isara* is to be interpreted in four, possibly five, different ways — and with which one must compare Sayat'-Nova's *Lalanin*, etc. — is typical:

'The sun grows terribly weary, it gives no light. Thou art seated on a planet
(or vehicle), he not (*is ara*).
Otherwise, apart from thee, who was it who settled the firmament, fenced
it in (*i-sar-a*)?
A lake of ink has surrounded the black-amber like a forest, (of) arrow-grass
(*isara*).
And from it a black bow transfixes my captive heart, alas! it is an arrow
(*isara*).'¹¹⁵

Nova's day and upon which satirists and enemies might have seized — and as adherents of certain modern theories might still.

¹¹⁴ *Sparsulad hk'vian majama, sheqrilad it'argmanebs,*
tsignebs gamokrebuli, ig ert'ad moikhmareba.
ikit'khviden da t'argmniden, lkhini ver shedareba.
da guli moqvare sibrdznis mast'ana daevanebs.

(*Majama*, introduction, st. 3, ed. Baramidze and Jakobia, *op. cit.*, p. 113).

¹¹⁵ *Mze tz'ud mashvraloba, ver nat'obs, etlze shen zikhar, is ara.*
skhvam shengan kide, samqaro vin gaisakhla, isara.
mlevisa tbaman gisheri t'evrad gar ivlo, isara.
da munit' mka gulsa tqvek'mnilsa, glakh, shavman mshvildman, isara. (ibid.)

The sense of this passage is, to say the least, unclear, deliberately cryptic, the impression being that of a 17th-century Mallarmé. The stanza is the first of four quatrains, each monorhymed with a phonetic assemblage usually to be analysed variously to give various meanings. Although it must be rash to attempt a translation of a poem that T'eimurazi's own countrymen and contemporaries found obscure, in order to understand the first stanza there is little alternative to seeking elucidation from the subsequent stanzas, which appear to signify the following:

'Ye disparage the sun. I mistrust it. On a planet someone else is fenced in (*isarebs*).

It badly (harmfully?) throws out rays and better illumines its course (*isarebs*).

The lake of ink like a forest surrounds the black-amber. It is fenced in (*isarebs*).

And there is destruction for the hearts of the beholders in the thornbush's arrows (*isar-eb-s*).

The heart is made for the narcissi [eyes]. Alas, they resemble spears.

No-one forced them: why then of themselves did they ravish reason, resembling luminaries?

Thus were (men) overcome: they quarrelled, resembling the young ones [Adam and Eve] in Eden.

And him [Adam] who yearned for her, she [Eve] separated [from Paradise]. I like (him) shall begin to sigh!

The collection [*Majama*] will not praise the wise. They are reduced to speechlessness, their mouth is shut (*daeqo*).

Light will be carried to the celestial (orbs) perfectly from thee, if of light there be not enough (*daeqo*).

Beauty was revealed in a rose like thee. Was there time enough (*daeqo*) [for that to be created?].

And alas! the flood of my tears, I swear, is enough (*daeqo*) (to fill) the (whole) world!¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ *Tk'ven mzesas tsunobt', me mas vechv, etlsa skhva vinme isarebs.*

eg tz'udad hp'antavs skhivt'a da uket' anat'ebis isarebs.

melnis tha tevrads gishersa gar shemoivlebs, isarabes.

Da esvris mchvretelt'a gulebsa ekalmukhisa isarebs.

Guli k'mnila nargizt'at'vis, glakh, lakhvart'a asakheblad.

ver dzaledvat', t'vit' rad khelqves, mash, mnat'obt'a asakheblad?

mit' idzlivnes, moikitz'khes, edems norch'ni asakheblad.

Da msuris mist'vis gachra, khelk'mna, vitsqo sult'k'ma asakheblad.

Ver gak'es brdzent'a krebulman, utqv ik'mnes, piri daeqo.

tz'iert' miegho nat'eli srul shengan, ar t'u da eqo.

gauch'ndeboda siturp'e vards shent'an khani daeqo.

Da glakh, ch'emt'a tz'remlt'a nakadi, vp'itz'av, sop'elsa daeqo.

(*ibid.*)

One cannot know for sure how much of the cryptic word-play and Persian imagery of this particular poem would have been known to Sayat'-Nova. But he functioned in a Georgian court setting, and was given himself to such conceits. Some of the elements, though not all, will be familiar to readers of the Armenian minstrel's verse. As illuminating the background against which he may be viewed, some attempt at interpretation of this in parts for the present writer impenetrable allegory will not be irrelevant.

The gist of the poem seems to be as follows: a lover suffers at the hands of the beloved, and separation from her is like the eclipse of the sun. She is light itself, beautiful as the rose. She possesses his heart, and wounds him with her glance. He sighs like Adam expelled from the Garden of Eden, and his tears make to flood the earth. It could be all a religious allegory, as with the pious interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, which recalls Sayat'-Nova's use of 'Emperor of China' to refer both to God and the Beloved: for who but God ('apart from thee') could be said to have settled the firmament, fenced it in? On the other hand, this may be a bold (some might say sacrilegious) image for the way the beloved has surrounded her dark eyes with kohl, making her lashes as it were a bow that sends an arrow to transfix her lover's heart. God, after all, cannot be said to be seated on any planet, whereas, for all her celestial nature, the Beloved can. The sun is said to grow weary and give no light because chosen earthlings, heroes and beauties, may in the Georgian mind put it in the shade. Rust'aveli lets King Rostevan describe his daughter T'inat'in as one 'by whom the sun is something to be disparaged' (*visgan mze satsunelia*),¹¹⁷ thus using the same verb as in T'eimurazi's 'Ye disparage the sun' (*t'k'ven mzesas tsunobt*). Why T'eimurazi uses the second person plural pronoun (*t'k'ven* 'ye') here, rather than the singular *shen* 'thou' as subsequently, is unclear. Perhaps he means to address all beauties who so put the sun in the shade. Or in accordance with an alternative interpretation, the wise who are to be 'reduced to speechlessness'. Sayat'-Nova does not go so far as to represent the beloved as eclipsing the Sun. It is sufficient that her face is like the sun and moon;¹¹⁸ that it is 'the morning sun, which grows (in splendour) as it rises'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Vep'khistaqosani*, ed. Shavishvili, st. 36, tr. Wardrop, st. 36 ('of whom the sun is not worthy')

¹¹⁸ *Êresêt ê shams u qamar*, in *Bēlbūli hid latz' is êli*, st. 3 v. 1, T p. 119, H p. 8.

¹¹⁹ *Êresêt arvutvan ariv, k'ani keha ku zarganay*, in *Modēt nēstoghēn*, st. 3 v. 1, I fol. 69, H p. 56.

Georgian tradition goes much further. The sun is frequently used as an image for the handsome lover, male or female.¹²⁰ The indications are that the sun occupied an important place in Georgian pre-Christian beliefs, carried over to some extent after the conversion, but from which an Armenian like Sayat'-Nova was virtually immune. For Rust'aveli the sun was 'the mighty of the mightiest might', and he knows that former philosophers called it 'the image of God', improving on this idea with the striking metaphor of the sun being 'the image of the sunny night of Him who is one in unity of being and everlasting, whom the heavenly bodies obey to the jot of a second'.¹²¹ Abandonment by the sun, literal and metaphorical, is a disaster: 'Sunlessness dries up the rose and fades its colour; not seeing the beloved renews our ancient grief'.¹²² 'Why should I wonder at darkness, since thou, O sun, hast abandoned me?', complains Avt'andil.¹²³ It is thus not usual to disparage the sun, as those addressed by T'eimurazi, and he himself, in describing it as weary and

¹²⁰ 'King' T'amara (*Vep'khistaosani*, st. 3) and Nestan-Darejani (st. 503/487) are called a sun, and also the hero Avt'andil, who is said to resemble both sun and moon (st. 40), so that one cannot accept Marjori Wardrop's statement that 'in Georgian folklore the moon is male and the sun female' (*tr. cit.*, p. 130, n. 2). A language without grammatical gender is incapable of maintaining such distinctions as St. Francis's *frate sole* (m) and *sora luna* (f), which would be the natural polarity (in the sermon of Giwt, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania 461-478, the moon and the sun are given female and male characteristics respectively, the eulogised St. Vach'ê being compared, though superior, to the latter, Movsês Daskhurantz'i, I.11, tr. Dowsett, p. 14). It is Avt'andil's comparison of himself with the moon ('How indeed can I speak with one so dread (as T'inat'in)! If the moon meet the sun it is consumed, it fades away', st. 125) that prompts Wardrop to conclude that the sun is a female deity, and the moon male (p. 21, n. 12). Avt'andil indeed addresses T'inat'in as 'O sun (*mzeo*, st. 133), but T'inat'in has already posited the possibility that the sun might become incarnate as a man to woo her (*mzet' a momkhvdes khortz' ieli, ch'emt' vis katz' ad shenak' mari*, st. 132/133); this does not denote a change of natural gender, only that both a hero and a heroine may be a sun.

¹²¹ *Umdzlest' a mdzelt' a mdzlesa*, ed. Shavishvili, st. 957, tr. Wardrop, st. 937; 'O sun ... thou whom former philosophers addressed as the image of God', ... *khat' ad ghmrt' isad*, Sh. 837, W. 817 (Ch'ubinashvili's reference to *Phil.* ii.6, noted by Wardrop, p. 131 n. 4, is inaccurate, there being no mention of the sun there, though *Malachi* 4,2 — 'But unto you who fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in its wings' — might be meant, if the prophet may count as a philosopher); ... *mzianisa ghamisad* ... 'sunny night', Sh. st. 836, W. st. 816.

¹²² Ed. Shavishvili, st. 830, tr. Wardrop, st. 811. Strangely, given the genders she has attached to the sun and the moon (above, n. 116), Wardrop translates this stanza with the normal, 'Franciscan' possessive pronouns: 'When the moon is far from the sun, distance makes her bright; when she is near, his ray consumes her — she is repelled, she cannot approach ...'; she notes the discrepancy, p. 130 n. 2, without discussing how the passage affects her male moon / female sun theory.

¹²³ Sh. 954, W. 816.

giving no light, do. But any light that is necessary, should the sun not give enough, will be supplied by that from the beloved, as stanza four above declares: which confirms the view that, though highly hyperbolic, this cryptic poem is little more than a conventional eulogy of the fair beloved.

While there is a similarity between the allegory and imagery in T'eimurazi's highly Persian-inspired poem and those of Sayat'-Nova, the differences are also illuminating. T'eimurazi's 'lake of ink [that] has surrounded the black-amber like a forest' is an image that goes back to Rust'aveli, for whom 'lake of ink' means 'dark eyes', and 'the forest of black-amber' means 'eye-lashes'.¹²⁴ Sayat'-Nova has a similar image in thine eyebrows form a hedge around thine eyes'.¹²⁵ But although, as we have seen, he may be slain by the sight of his beloved without a dagger,¹²⁶ his images are not as powerful as those of the Georgians, who have long been the victims of the beloved's black eyelashes ('My slayers are black eyelashes, trees of black amber'¹²⁷), and of her eyebrows, the 'black bow' by which T'eimurazi's heart is stricken,¹²⁸ the Persian *abrû-yi kamân-kash* 'eyebrows like bows (letting fly the arrows of love' (Steingass), which explains the 'arrow' (*isar*-) and the 'arrows of the thorn-bush (i.e. the rose)' of stanzas 1 and 2. Despite his abundant flower imagery, Sayat'-Nova does not know narcissi as a symbol for the eyes, common in Persian and consequently in Georgian,¹²⁹ which is their

¹²⁴ *Melnisa that'a mijarvit' buravs gisherisa cherit'a* 'He tightly closes the lakes of ink with the black-amber ceiling [his lashes]', Sh. 1009, W. 988; *gisherisa tevrša agugebs* 'He dams up (his tears) in a forest of black-amber', Sh. 1254, W. 1232. *gisher-i*, surely connected with Arm. *gisher* 'night', refers to black amber (Wardrop renders 'jet'), the yellow being *k'arva* (e.g. Sh. 139, W. 138), a metaphor for a sickly complexion; *gisher* is used by itself as 'the eye' or 'the iris of the eye', among Georgians predominantly dark brown to black: it does not mean 'pupil of the eye', as D. Ch'ubinashvili, Wardrop, etc., this feature appearing universally black except in albinos, and thus being of no special aesthetic interest.

¹²⁵ *Unk'irēt ach'kirut êlav muhajar*, in *K'iz saz gu ka al qumashên*, st. 2 v. 3, H p. 72.

¹²⁶ *Ov tesnum ê, miřanum ê* 'he who sees you dies', in *Êshkhemet andanak ela, ek mort'e, jallat'ên dun is*, st. 2 v. 3, T p. 124.

¹²⁷ *Ch'emni momklvelni tsamtsami, shavni gisherisa khenia, Vep'khistaosani*, ed. Shavishvili, var. n. 363, *khenia* for st. 1261 *skhenia*, which latter form makes no sense; tr. Wardrop, st. 1239.

¹²⁸ St. 1, v. 4.

¹²⁹ *gushâdeh nargiz-i ra nâ'za ḥasrat âb az chashm / nihâdeh lâlah za saudâ va dil-i sad dâgh* 'the fair narcissus has opened with tears (flowing) from its eyes with grief over the tulip for its passion and heart of hundred burns', *Hâfiẓ*, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 62; *tz'remli tz'kheli asovlebdis nargist'agan vards zrulsa* 'From the narcissi hot tears moistened the frosted rose', *Vep'khistaosani*, Sh. 152, W. 151.

meaning in 'The heart (*gul-i*) is made for the narcissi. Alas, they resemble spears. No-one forced them: why then of themselves do they ravish reason, resembling luminaries?'¹³⁰ To be struck by spears is a common image in Georgian poetry to symbolise the receipt of an angry look from the beloved, and for being stricken by grief in general.¹³¹ Their comparison by T'eimurazi with luminaries recalls Lucretius's *lucida tela diei* 'shining lances of the day', i.e. the sun's rays, and Blake's probably independent image 'When the stars threw down their spears, And watered heaven with their tears'.¹³² Sayat'-Nova does not use this image to denote wounding by the beloved's eyes: he compares himself indirectly with the bloodstained deer wounded by the *niza* or 'lance',¹³³ but that is hardly comparable with the Persian and Georgian metaphor. T'eimurazi's statement that 'the heart (*gul-i*) is made for the narcissi' probably means that 'the lover's heart is made for the beloved's eyes to look into', and which they can wound like spears. One wonders, however, whether his Persian education had made him familiar with the Persian use of *nargiz u gul* 'the narcissus and the rose' to symbolise 'the eye and the ear of one's beloved' (Steingass), and whether the Georgian royal poet was indulging in a pun between one language and another (for *gul-* is nowhere else attested in Georgian in any meaning other than 'heart, mind'), a conceit that was to become a characteristic of Sayat'-Nova's work: the ideas 'the rose is made for the narcissi' or 'the ear is made for the eyes' would be, however, cryptic enough to reduce the wise to speechlessness, and may be better abandoned; but the trouble with such practitioners of *tejnîs* is that one cannot be sure how far one is called upon to stretch one's reason. That the beloved may 'ravish reason' needs no explanation. Rust'aveli claims to have lost his wits for Queen T'amara, whom he calls, using the phraseology of T'eimurazi, 'the ravisher of his reason'.¹³⁴ Sayat'-Nova is particularly vulnerable to

¹³⁰ St. 3 vv. 1-2.

¹³¹ *K've tsva vit' kldisa napralsa vep'khi pir-gamekhebuli. / artz'a mze hgvandi ... / ... guls me lakhvar-khebuli* '(Darejan) crouched down like a panther in the cleft of a rock, face thunderstruck. She was no longer like the sun ... I was stricken in the heart as by a lance', *Vep'khistaqosani*, Sh. 522, W. 506; *Vintz'a ismidos, daesvas lakhvari gulsa kheuli* 'Whoever hears, a jagged spear will pierce his heart', Sh. W. st. 4.

¹³² Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, I, 147; Blake, *The Tyger*.

¹³³ *Tesa arunut (Ioane yaralu) jeiranên, vursnurt'i niznitz' bedamagh* 'I beheld the bloody (wounded) gazelle, oppressed by the hunter's spear', in *Ajab k'u sirtên ov shinitz'*, st. 4 v. 4, I fol. 68 (omitting st. 3), H p. 60; A.D. 1759.

¹³⁴ *Ch'emman khel-mk'mnelman*, Sh. 9, W. 16; cf. *mist'vis vkhelob* 'I am mad because of her', Sh. 8, W. 15.

this condition: 'Thou hast carried away my wits from my head'¹³⁵ etc., etc.

All in all, despite the similarities between T'eimurazi's and Sayat'-Nova's Persian-inspired conceits with which they entertained the Georgian court, it is doubtful whether the latter came directly under the influence of his royal predecessor, though he could scarcely have been left unaware of his existence. But the differences in their contribution to the spreading of Persian culture — and in that it is clear that T'eimurazi harked back to his Georgian poetic compatriots of seven or so centuries earlier,¹³⁶ which is not the practice of Sayat'-Nova — permits one to place Sayat'-Nova's virtual claim to have introduced Irakli II to Persian ways into perspective. Persian themes and styles could have been in no way unfamiliar to the King. But Sayat'-Nova was a musician as well as a poet, and he may have been referring in his boast to an introduction of Persian musical modes and rhythms, for in one important annotation it is his attainments on three instruments that he stresses. Except in his (real or fictional) relationship with the beloved, it cannot be said that Sayat'-Nova was unaware of his own worth. His honesty, however, shines through his autobiographical comments, and one can be sure that he was not one to indulge in false pretences. In his own mind, at least, he did enliven the Georgian court with Iranian ways, and in a style that may be claimed to be as striking as that of T'eimurazi, and, though owing a debt to Persia, still individual and innovative.

¹³⁵ *Khilk'ës gëlkhemes taril is*, in *Khoskirët malum im ari*, st. 7 v. 1, T p. 109, H p. 25; *Bemurvat' yar, khilk'ës gëlkhes mi tani* 'Merciless beloved, do not carry off the wits from my head', in *Is kanch'um im lalanin*, st. 8 v. 1, T p. 139, H p. 22; *Tarar khilk'ës, heyran arir* 'You took away my wits, you made me lose my head', in *Angach ara barit'avur*, st. 15 v. 1, T p. 105, H p. 14; *Khilk'ës tanul tévats lighnurt' im tari* 'Having allowed my wits to be carried away, I have become as one swimming around (lost)', in *Ês inch' êlav indz hid, tes inch' im ari* 'What is this that has happened to me, see what I have done', st. 1 v. 3, H p. 83, A.D. 1758. For other examples, see K'och'oyan, pp. 91-2.

¹³⁶ And with his *majama* (APT *majāmi*'), cf. the near synonymous APT *maqâmât* 'assemblies and works recited at them' of Al-Ḥarīrī of Basra (1054-1122), a mine of subtle riddles, well-known to the Persians, and possibly also to T'eimurazi. It is still highly regarded, e.g. in England (see M. Bryant, *Dictionary of Riddles*, Cassell: London, 1990, pp. 27-28, 76-78).

CHAPTER TEN

THE GEORGIAN POEMS

It is undoubtedly temerarious for a West European, and one who has not, owing to political geography, spent long years in the natural habitat of the people he studies, to enter into a discussion of their national characteristics and aesthetics. That there are, however, for historical as well as biological reasons, differences in these respects between Armenians, Georgians, and Azeris, is obvious. Obvious also is the fact that a poet who seeks a hearing among these various peoples must take these differences, consciously or unconsciously, into account, and few could have been more qualified than Sayat'-Nova, an Armenian grown up among Armenians, educated in Georgia, and artistically and philosophically influenced by the surrounding Azeris, to appreciate the diversity of these three races, a diversity reflected in the three linguistic branches, Indo-European, Caucasian, and Ural-Altaic, into which his œuvre is divided — and every language embodies an individual *Weltanschauung*. Of course, since he is principally a lyric poet, Sayat'-Nova's personality will strongly imbue all three languages. But — and here the outside observer may have some advantage — distinct psychological differences between the three groups are clearly discernible. Here one treads on delicate ground. Generalisation is unavoidable, and anyone who has done his mathematics and physics and acquired a healthy distrust of statistics will be aware that generalisations of an ethnic nature may defy scientific scrutiny. Anthropologists' calipers are of little use in determining the variances between one people and another in the matter of national temperament, itself a sufficiently vague and ill-defined concept to strike terror into a natural scientist not in the pay of some political ideology. There are differences between Armenians, Georgians, and Azeris. What are they? The Armenians, at the time of Sayat'-Nova at least — for history plays an important rôle in the formation of national characteristics, and the Armenians who fought for Tigran the Great and Vardan Mamikonian were probably very different from those who had been subjugated for centuries by the Turks and Persians — tend to be, to judge by their literature and music, melancholy, pessimistic, and

cautious. They are deeply religious: those who expect much from God in spite of plagues, famines and earthquakes, have usually learned to expect even less from their fellow men. Azeri Turks are more self-confident.¹ Turks are used to victory over their enemies, or victims, and to governing them. Byron, an acute and sophisticated observer with much personal experience, echoed Castellan's view of the Turks as 'graves par inclination et par habitude', with 'the face of Mussulman not oft betrays to standers-by the mind within', and 'Unmoved the Moslem sits, the light Greek carols by'. In the sphere of personal relationships they are less secure. Whether the discipline imposed by Islam on intercourse between the sexes inhibited or exacerbated their natural sensuality, their love-poetry, a rich genre, is characterised by unrequited yearning for the unattainable. Other verse, much under the influence of Persia, has a strong mystic element. The Georgians are fundamentally mountain dwellers, hardy warriors often engaged, like the Scots, in battles between one clan and another, with no strong ambitions to subjugate foreign nations, but determined not to be subjugated by others. Those who have succeeded to a certain extent in subjugating them politically in recent centuries, Persians and Russians, have never succeeded in breaking their spirit. They are not melancholy, they are not grave, they are not pessimistic. They are self-assured, conscious of their ethnic and cultural individuality, not to be offended with impunity. Being ruled for centuries by a dynasty, the Bagratid, allied by marriage to the Comneni and Palaiologi of Byzantium, one of the longest royal lines in the Near East and Europe, they have a strong tradition of chivalry and *courtoisie*, reflected in the style of the knights in their major epic, *The Man in the Panther Skin*. Their music, in which choirs play a large rôle, is polyphonic, contrapuntal, as such unique in the Near East, where the single melodic line is supported only by a constant drone. Sir Oliver Wardrop described Georgia as a Land of Women, Wine, and Song, and even those who may object to such a characterisation as exaggerated and over-simplified will have to admit, to argue *via negativa*, that the description fits the Georgians to a far greater extent than it would fit the Armenians or the Azeris. W.E.D. Allen, a foremost expert on this nation, sums it up

¹ The Turkish proverb, 'Allah created the serpent, the hare, and the Armenian', intending to show the Armenian as cunning and timid, must refer to a subjugated people. Although one does not wish to trade in racial insults, perhaps in the interests of natural justice the Armenians should be invited to say who created the Turk; though perhaps those who claim the Boz Kurt or Grey Wolf as ancestor would be slow to take offence.

so: 'Thus we may view upon a very broad and general background of the history of these peoples — the Georgians in their broad and mellow land, with their troubadours and light philosophies, their joistings, their drinking-bouts, their heroes and their games; and the Armenians, a dour and dogged yet self-pitying people, with their dogmas and their rites, their monkish chroniclers, their hard soldiers, their merchants and their martyrs'.²

In how far does Sayat'-Nova's various œuvre reflect these national characteristics? The poet, an Armenian and proud of it, is naturally best at home with his own language, and it is upon his Armenian songs that his lasting fame will rest. Among them there are those which are sad and gay, philosophic and light-hearted, heartfelt and unserious, individual and conventional. His Azeri œuvre is difficult for the present writer to assess aesthetically. It comprises many love-songs, didactic poems, mystic verse, and alphabetic word-plays. It seems musical enough, no doubt in large part due to the built-in musicality of Turkish with its obligatory vocalic harmony, and the poet will have taken care to exploit this. It must perhaps be left to the Azeris to establish Sayat'-Nova's position within their literature, but it may be felt that there is little in his work to rank with the most profound of Turkish folksong, e.g. the türkü *Çesmeye gittim* 'I went to the well'. With Georgian Sayat'-Nova is technically most proficient. Apart from his poems of protest to the Georgian king prior and subsequent to his banishment from the court, a personal disaster profoundly felt, his Georgian poems reflect that people's propensities for wine, women, and song to an extent that makes it difficult to fit him into Allen's Armenian stereotype, but not the feelings of national pride and patriotism that imbue the work of their own native poets. Indeed, Sayat'-Nova displays little awareness of this: he is more concerned to underline the barbarity and banausia of the Georgian nobles. In his poetic defence before Irakli II, he boasts that he has enlivened the King with 'Persian ways'; Georgian poetry, especially the epics, had long been subject to Persian influence, but one feels that the minstrel's Georgian audience, including the King, would have been better pleased if Sayat'-Nova had extolled their own native virtues rather than those of their politically dangerous neighbours. Though it is certainly not neglected, one doubts that our poet's Georgian verse ranks high within Georgian literature. Although his fellow poet and minstrel Ioseb

² Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

Grishashvili and, of course, the scholar Baramidze rated him highly there is truth in Donald Rayfield's view that 'because he was an Armenian by birth and a simple tailor [*read* probably weaver or dyer] by profession, Sayat'-Nova ... was brushed aside in the aristocrats' histories of Georgian literature', and reason to perceive 'a Georgian consensus that Sayat'-Nova was a greater poet in Armenian, Azeri and Farsi' [there is not enough in Farsi in the poet's *œuvre* to justify its inclusion]. Rayfield rejects this view, calling it 'at best snobbery, at worst chauvinism', and finding in the poet's Georgian verse an 'irrepressible vitality'.³ To my mind, Sayat'-Nova *was* a greater poet in Armenian than in his other languages. Overall, when not concerned with the poet's own troubles, his Georgian verse gives too lightweight an impression. Indeed, when asking oneself whether a charge of incompetence may have been one of the factors contributing to the poet's dismissal in 1759, one can perceive reasons for dissatisfaction with his productions on the part of the Georgians. Certainly, Georgian poems would have been expected of a minstrel to the Georgian court. Set beside the large number of songs in Azeri and Armenian, however, his 35 extant Georgian songs seem few. Moreover, many appear to have been more in the nature of potboilers, and one or two border on the inane. The following love-ditty, which has no particular literary merit, was doubtless composed to demonstrate the poet's skill in adapting to Georgian verse an Azeri form, annotated by Ioane as *üch'lämä* 'tripling', in which the refrain verses each comprise three concepts, arranged in the hendecasyllabic verse as groups 4 + 4 + 3 syllables. The text is except for two variants (**b**, **i**) that of Ioane. Baramidze's version is probably edited on it, in one verse carelessly with regard to the all-important metre.⁴

Modi, saqvarelo, baghshi shavidet'.
baghi kargi, vardi kargi, khe kargi.
sikvdilamdin gared aghar gavidet'.
sakhe kargi, mt'vare kargi, mze kargi.

Davliot' ghvino, araghi^a ch'venia.
mejlis^b sazandari, saghi ch'venia.
gavagdot' mebaghe, baghi ch'venia.
lkhini kargi, dro kargi, dghe kargi.

a I; **B** *araqi*. **b** **B**; **I** *mejniis*.

³ *The literature of Georgia*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994, pp. 120-122.

⁴ Fol. 13A, B pp. 57-58.

Mailia vardi, aghar^c abia.
bulbuli mas ch'ivis, vart's^d uzis chia.
kheivanis garshemos gashlila ia.^e
tsqali kargi, kvali kargi, mtse kargi.

Tant' gidkhdeba satsvimari aisi.
alvis khes moukhsams atam qaisi.^f
bulbuli mas ch'ivis, midis maisi.^g
suli kargi, guli kargi, t've kargi.

Me Saia^t'nova var, ar mak'vs dzali.^h
dabzandi, dagigo khorasnis khali.
mijnurma ghobidam ara gkrasⁱ t'vali..
sazi kargi, shen kargi khar^j, me kargi.^k

'Come, beloved, let us go into the garden.
 The garden is good, the rose is good, the tree is good.
 Until death (supervene), may we not come out again.
 The view is good, the moon is good, the sun is good.

Let us pour out the wine. The raki is ours.
 The assembly's minstrel, the saki is ours.
 Let us dismiss the gardener, the garden is ours!
 The party is good, the time is good, the day is good.

The rose is elegantly-groomed^l, in no way^m gone to seed.
 The Nightingale sings-a-lament to it. In the Rose sits a worm.ⁿ
 All around the avenue the violets^o have blossomed.
 The water is good, the flower-bed is good, the assistant is good.

You dress yourself in the rainy^p dawn.
 On the flame-tree^q peaches and apricots grow!^r
 The Nightingale laments to it. May is departing.^s
 The spirit is good, the heart is good, the month is good.

c I; B *arsad*. **d** I; B *bulbuli stsukhs, rom qvavils*. **e** I; B *kheivanshi gadashlila sul ia*.
f I; B *alvis khesa gamouskhams qaisi*. **g** I; B *qvela ch'ivis, rom davkarget' maisi*. **h**
 I; B *me, sayat'novas, khmashi mak'vs dzali*. **i** B; I *hkras*. **j** I; B omits *khar*, spoiling
 the metre, which requires four syllables here. **k** Ioane's annotation (not reproduced
 by Baramidze) reads *ese uch'lama qap'ia saiat'novam t'avisi megobari rom motquebit'*
da k'ovleshia baghashi tsauqvenia imazed ik'iv ut'k'voms. **l** *maili*, not in Ch^c, Tsch,
 M, is APT *mailâ* 'naturally or structurally lopsided; many branched, heaped up; a
 one-sided mode of combing the hair or of binding on the turban' (R); Å lists Az *meylli*
 only as 'inclined'. **m** I; B 'nowhere'. **n** I; B 'the Nightingale laments [different verb]
 that a worm sits in the Rose'. **o** I; B 'in the avenue only the violet has blossomed'.
p I, B; the poet could have said 'dewy' (*namiani*) with the same number of syllables; but
 rain is regarded more as a blessing in the East than in the West, where W.H. Davies' sen-
 timent ('This is the weather the cuckoo likes, And so do I') is rarer than that of Verlaine
 ('Il pleut sur la ville comme il pleut dans mon cœur'). **q** The normal meaning is
 'poplar'. **r** I; B *only* 'apricots'. **s** I; B 'Everything laments that we have lost the
 May', an unconvincing reading.

I am Sayat^c-Nova, I have no power.^t
 Please come. I shall spread before you a Khorasan rug.
 No crazed-lover will eye you^u from the palisade.
 The saz is good, you are good, I am good.'

The poem is probably an epithalamium. Ioane's grammatically confused annotation to the effect that it was recited by Sayat^c-Nova to a friend who had been led up the garden path must be pure imagination.⁵ There is no sublimity of thought or imagery here, but it would not be Sayat^c-Nova were there no note of melancholy in the midst of jollity, or ambiguity amidst repeated declarations that all is well with the world. The Nightingale makes the alarming charge that the Rose has a canker, but the image lacks the disturbing, sinister nature of Blake's similar image of a hidden worm in his *Rose, thou art sick*. Sayat^c-Nova must be lamenting possession of his Beloved by another, whom he would long to supplant, though he does not here make the suprising claim, 'I am a cochineal worm of great price'.⁶ *The alvis-khe*, rendered above as 'flame-tree' (*alva* 'burning' is also a tree-name⁷) is normally the 'poplar' or, unfitting as an image of beauty, the 'aloe' (Tsch). Why, then, does it bear peaches and apricots? Were they, say, hung on the shapely but darkish tree as decoration during a wedding feast, and/or as a symbol of the bride in her nuptial finery? One can but hope that someone in Georgia may have the answer.

Other poems in Georgian by Sayat^c-Nova are of a higher level. The majority are love-songs, but in the course of examining the events in the poet's life we have had occasion to mention the many *plaintes* to his sponsor, the King. Despite their importance, there is no wholly accurate

t I; B 'I, Sayat^c-Nova, have power in my voice' [a claim more typical of the poet].
 u B; I 'will eye it'.

⁵ See above, n.k. The only way one can reconcile the ergative *Saiat^cnovam* with the nominative *t'avisi megobari* is to interpose a verb, either the grammatically isolated present *itz'is* 'he knows', or a verb in the aorist, e.g. *nakha*, *kheda* 'he saw' or, semantically better, *tsarmosakha* 'he imagined'. One might then translate, 'This is an *üchlāmā* poem. Sayat^c-Nova [saw] his friend, that he by trickery and in a fetter [*k'ovle-* for *k'ovl-i* 'block of wood', or for *k'olva* 'immuring'?] has led into the garden; he there recites it over him'. For the possible 'fetter' image, cf. *k'uni* = *kündä* in the Azeri poem *Rahmat^c p'ir ustada*, st. 2, v. 2, below, Chapter Eleven, p. 427, n. u, pp. 429-430. Ioane's scenario is a work of fancy.

⁶ *Me dziris p'asis qirmizisa chia var*, in *Akhla modi genatz'valo* 'Come now, I beg thee', st. 4, v. 1, I fol. (10A); the poem is not in B.

⁷ See above, Chapter Eight, p. 326.

translation of the Georgian poems in any language, nor has anyone undertaken a critical edition of the text. Although the *Tetrak* contains many annotations in Georgian, and Armenian and Azeri poems in Georgian script, it contains none of the poet's Georgian poems. The most important source for these is the collection of his father's Armenian, Azeri, and Georgian poems made by his youngest son Ioane dated 23rd March 1823 (O.S.) made in St. Petersburg for the Crown Prince T'eimurazi, and which has lain for many years in the library of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia in that city.⁸ On fol. 1r, between the first and second stanzas of *Ra ik'neba damidzakho*, the first poem there recorded to which we shall return below, there is a note enclosed in a cartouche written in a tiny script differing from that of Ioane and most probably written by the Crown Prince himself, reading 'The book belongs to T'eimurazi, son of the king of Georgia; Ioane, son of Saat'noma, wrote down for me the poems of his father Saat'noma; thus he made a memorial for him'.⁹ Ioane's colophon on fol. 72A, a would-be courtly but cringing address to the gracious and mighty son of a king, refers to 'the miserable, late and insignificant and worthless slave (*mona*), my father Saiat'nova',¹⁰ but praying that he be remembered. This manuscript, comprising 72 folios written in a small, rapid and often indistinct cursive, contains on its initial folios 26 Georgian poems.¹¹ Ioane wrote his

⁸ Institut Narodov Azii, MS Georg 222, shelf-mark H 21.

⁹ *Es tsigni sak'art'velos mep'is dzis t'eimurazisa aris, saat'noma shvilma* (next word smudged) *damitsera t'avis mavis lek'sebi, mas ekhsovrada* [denominal from *makhsovari* 'one who remembers'?).

¹⁰ *ineba satz'odavi mitz'valebuli t'avis umtz'iresi da ughirsi mona mama ch'emi saiat'novas moikhseneba*.

¹¹ *Ra ik'neba damidzakho*, fol. 1 (B p. 45); *Baghi bulbulit' avsila*, fol. 2 (B 13); *Ra zarbabi*, fol. 3 (B 47); *Shuaghamis masklavivit'* (i.e. *varsklavavit'*) (B 49); *Gana me mshieri viqav*, fol. 5 (B 51); *Sop'elsa da sop'elshia*, fol. 6 (B 27); *Galobs t'ut'i*, fol. 7 (B 35); *Me shent'ana siqvaruli*, fol. 8 (B 61); *Ra sargoa*, fol. 8A (B 69); *Dameskhnebi*, fol. 9 (B 21, *Damekhseni*); *Kobo vardo gashlilo mijnuri khari nu ginda*, fol. 9A (equivalent to but very divergent from B 55 *qurmochrili sheni qma var, utz'kho nok'ari nu ginda*); *Ra ik'neba ert'khel*, fol. 10 (B 53); *Akhla modi genatz'valo*, fol. 10A (poem not included by B); *An amist'ana naghveli*, fol. 11 (B 73); *Bulbuli tiris, dagitz'ia mana, shenia*, fol. 11A (marked 10A)-12 (B33, very variant); *Kokobelis* (form corrected, and corrupt, mixture of *kokobi* 'bud' and *mkobili* 'adorned'?) *dzudzut'*, fol. 12A (B 43, *kokobi dzudzut'*); *Gavgizhdi zghvasavit'*, fol. 13 ('translated from the Tatar'; B Addenda, p. 75); *Modi saqvarelo* fol. 13A (B 57); *Saqvarlis baghshi*, fol. 14 (B 39); *Damijero*, fol. 14A (B 9, *Damijere*); *Ratz' katz's mezobe(l)zed*, fol. 15 (B 19); *Zogi katz's t'avis ugnurebit'*, fol. 15A (B 25, *Zog-zogi katz'ia metad ughono*, very variant); *Khmelet'i k'veqana su(l) shen*, fol. 16 (B 63); *Zghvas rogor gaashrobs*, fol. 16A (B 29); *Samart'ali miqav*, fol. 17 (with preface) (B 17); *Mist'vis shens das vlaparakob / dghes turp'a tani vnakhe* 'Therefore I speak to your sister; today I saw (your) beautiful body', fol. 18 (B 59, *Shent'an*

manuscript only a matter of 28 years after his father's death, and must be taken seriously. It seems doubtful that he relied for his versions entirely upon his own memory, which would then compare with that of a Muslim *hâfiẓ*, more probable that he could call upon written notes, possibly by the hand of his father. The fact that the *Tetrak* contains no Georgian poems, apart from the few hemistichs in the *Poem in Four Languages*, calls for comment, one possible explanation being that they formed the subject of another notebook, kept in the family and available to Ioane. Ioane's versions contain orthographical, grammatical, and lexical peculiarities. One can see from Sayat'-Nova's Georgian annotations in the *Tetrak* that his Georgian was not altogether perfect, and Ioane's unevennesses are more an assurance of authenticity than otherwise. The first printed collection of the poet's Georgian poems, 28 in number, was made by Ioseb Grishashvili, who in 1924 and 1934 also published articles containing thitherto 'unknown' poems,¹² one of them published also in 1934 by Ioseb Megrelidze.¹³ In 1937 I. Balakhashvili published a variant version of *Gikhdeba zari*.¹⁴ The variance between Grishashvili's version and that of Ioann Batonishvili/Khelashvili in *Kalmasoba* of the important farewell ode *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo* has been examined above.¹⁵ All these publications, most of which were not available to the present writer, and other articles, were studied by Alek'sandre Baramidze for his important collection of Sayat'-Nova's Georgian songs published in 1963, comprising some notes on sources, a glossary, and a literary appreciation.¹⁶ This work contains the texts of 35 different poems, but is a far from critical edition, variant texts of only two poems being given, and two very minor variant readings.¹⁷ Relying mainly

mitom vlaparakob / dghes rom turp'a tani vnakhe 'I speak with you because today I saw (your) beautiful body'), Ioane here defying reason. For *davlaparakob* 'I shall speak'?

¹² *Sayat'-nova*, T'bilisi, 1918; the poem *Samot'khidan* in the journal *Kavkasion*, 1924, nos. 3-4, pp. 128-8; the poems *Ch'emsas vardsa daekhseni* and *Kavkasionis* in 'Saiat'novas utz'nobi lek'sebi', *Literaturuli gazet'i*, 1934, no. 27. Refs. apud B, p. 89.

¹³ 'Sayat'novas utz'nobi lek'sebi da tz'nobilze shenishvnebi', *Mnat'obi*, 1934, nos. 7-8, pp. 95-96 (re *Ch'emsas vards daekhseni*); idem, 'Saiat'novas lek'sebis gamo', *Sabchot'a khelovneba*, 1935, no. 3, pp. 95-96. Refs. apud B p. 89.

¹⁴ *Literaturuli Sak'art'velo*, 1937, no. 17. Ref. apud B p. 91.

¹⁵ Above, Chapter Four, pp. 121-129; cf. Chapter One, p. 25. Ref. apud B p. 91.

¹⁶ *Saiat'nova* (*Saiat'nova - k'art'uli lek'sebi*, [Arm] *Sayat'-Nova - vrazh'akan erger*, [Az.] *Sayat'-Nova - Gurju she'rläri*), T'bilisi, 1963 (sources, pp. 89-92, life and works; pp. 93-110).

¹⁷ Two versions of *Gikhdeba zari* / *Gatz'via zari*, pp. 33, 77 (*I Bulbuli tiris*, fol.(11A)-12, see n. 9), and two of *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*, pp. 23, 76; two minor variants, pp. 75, 78.

upon Grishashvili's text, Baramidze has consulted the manuscript of Ioane, to whom he refers by his adopted Russified name of Ivan Seidov, including, with one sole exception,¹⁸ all the Georgian poems there contained, but often in widely (unnoted) variant forms. His edition contains seven poems not recorded by Ioane, the most important of which is *She satsqalo ch'emo t'avo*,¹⁹ perhaps omitted by the poet's son, demonstrably conscious of his father's trials at the hands of certain Georgians who might include Irakli II, out of a feeling of tact towards the member of the Georgian royal family for whom he wrote his memorial. Ioane's texts contain orthographical, grammatical, and lexical peculiarities, and the syllabic count of the metres is often inexact. Baramidze's versions are in decent Georgian, and the metres are correct. The suspicion is, however, that these versions are sanitised. An example of his concern for correctness is, in one of his rare textual notes, his ridiculing by use of an exclamation mark a form that another editor had clearly taken from Ioane.²⁰ If one so treated all the slips in Ioane's and his father's Georgian, the printer would soon run out of exclamation marks. One can see from Sayat'-Nova's Georgian annotations in the *Tetrak* that his Georgian was not altogether literate, some consonants, especially in non-singable clusters typical of the Georgian language, being elided.²¹ One must not forget that the life-blood of speech is not ink, but air, and just as music has more to do with sound than notation, a minstrel is expert with the spoken rather than the written word. Thus Ioane's unevennesses may be rather an indication of authenticity, though one doubts, given Sayat'-Nova's metrical skill, that whatever his source, written or lodged in the memory, it always represented the final version. Much work remains to be done on the text of Sayat'-Nova's Georgian poems (as indeed upon that of his Armenian and Azeri poems), preferably in Georgia, where the necessary journals are available. Ioane's version are too irregular to be taken as a true representation of his father's work, and Baramidze's text,

¹⁸ *Akhla modi genatz'valo*, I fol. (10A); see above, n. 11.

¹⁹ The others are: *Khar turp'a*, B p. 11; *Mzechabuk Orbelianzed*, B p. 31; *Anton Kat'alikoszed*, B p. 32; *Arvis uari ar ut'k'vams*, B p. 37; *Aset'i tqili*, B p. 41; *Ch'emsavardsa daekhseni*, B p. 67; *Shavo miqvalivit' t'valebiano*, B p. 71.

²⁰ See below, p. 418, n. d.

²¹ That some elision, at least of the -v-, should occur in the group -rskvl- in the common word *varskvlavi* 'star' is natural: unlike Armenian, Georgian does not resort to interconsonantal *shwas* (ə) in such groups. Changing also the initial v- of this word to m-, probably a dialectal development, Ioane writes the word as *masklavi*-, thus eliding the -r- and the -v- of the cluster (*Shuaghamis varskvlavivit'*, fol. 4, see n. 11 above).

despite the reservations mentioned, is in this work taken as the basis of the versions and translations.

In our translations below, only rarely has an attempt been made to reproduce the Georgian metre and rhyme-scheme. English has no rhyming facility capable of reflecting the richness of Georgian rhymes. This is not necessarily a disadvantage. Attempts by speakers of languages that do possess comparable rhyme potential to reproduce the original metre and rhyme-scheme have by just such a preoccupation resulted in severe distortions of the meaning and imagery of the text. Take for example the first stanza of *Ra ik'neba damidzakho*, the first poem recorded by Ioane in his manuscript, translated literally into English below. In his in many respects useful selection of translations from the work of Sayat'-Nova published in 1961,²² Gaysaryan's Russian version of this poem, which reproduces the octosyllabic metre of each hemistich and the compound rhyme-scheme (*radîf*) within and between the stanzas, would read, in English translation, as follows:

'I ever desired to hear you playful sommons. Come, let me see (you).
You are sapphire, or ruby, or diamond — what crystal! Come, let me see
(you).
I have not ceased to be deeper in love than ever before. Come, let me see
(you).
.....
I am a nightingale, I seek my bush. I have become a prince-without-inher-
itance. Come, let me see (you).'

Thus Gaysaryan has skilfully reproduced the Georgian *radîf* (*halali / ra lali / jalali / alalki khar, daginakho*) with Russian *zhelal / kristall / perestal / stal, pridi uzryu*), the very rhymes in *-al* of the original, but at a great cost to the meaning. The summonse the poet hopes for, though the poem is light-hearted, is not presented as playful: that is not the style of Sayat'-Nova, who prefers to conjure up dire perils, the beloved being Falcon to his Nightingale. The traditional image of the mistress as the new moon has gone, though that may be no loss that may not be retrieved in many other poems. And Gaysaryan's poet has become an *izgoy* 'a Russian prince with no hereditary expectations as successor to the throne' (Pawlowski), thus of nobler stock than Sayat'-Nova, ever ready to point to his humble origins.

²² Suren Gaysaryan (ed.), *Sayat-Nova, stikhotvoreniya*, Biblioteka Poëta, malaya seriya, Sovetskii Pisatel': Leningrad, 1961, pp. 181-2.

Similar reservations hold good for the Modern Eastern Armenian versions, made in the appropriate Tiflis dialect of the Armenian poems with great ingenuity by Morus Hasrat'yan, whose collection of the Armenian, Georgian and Azeri songs (the last two in translation) is a valuable contribution to any serious study of the poet.²³ In English translation, his version of the same stanza reads:

'Whatever may be, whether you summon me, or be *halal*, come, let me see.
What sapphire you are, what diamond you are, or what ruby you are, come,
let me see.

I fear you might seize me, that you are a *jalal*. Come, let me see.

.....
I am the Nightingale. I seek the Rose. If you are *alal*, come, let me see.'

Hasrat'yan has thus kept the original metre and the *radîf*. He has also kept the rhymes in *-al*, but only by reproducing the original Georgian words, in his Glossary defining *halal* as 'legitimate, sincere', *alal* as 'small bird of prey (Georgian *alali*).' No doubt the version is intelligible to some Armenians, especially those of Tiflis, less so those of London and Paris, and one wonders if it can legitimately claim to be a translation at all. But it has the merit of forcing the reader to enter the world of Sayat'-Nova, and does not transport him to a Russian court.

On the basis of the versions of Ioane, fol. 1-1A, and Baramidze, pp. 45-46, *Ra ik'neba damidzakho* reads as follows. The subsequent English version does not seek to emulate the rhymes and rhythms of the original, which must be read in Georgian for anything approaching a true appreciation to be achieved.

Ra ik'neba damidzakho, halali khar, daginakho.

ra iagundi^a, almasi, ra lali khar, daginakho.

meshinian damichiro, jalali khar, daginakho.

bulbuli var me, vards vedzeb^b, alali khar, daginakho.^c

Nu^d vetsqinos, ch'emo kargo, shens ikhtiarzed gamodi.

p'iandazi mogikhdeba, zarbabzed, zarzed gamodi.

aramtz' vinme^e daginakhos, p'ardis nap'arzed gamodi.

a I; B *iaqut'i*. b I; B *bulbuli var, vards davedzeb*; both readings have the required hemistich of 8 syllables. c As Gaysaryan (p. 70) and Hasrat'yan (p. 260) note, one verse is missing from this first stanza, which should consist of five verses; indeed, Ioane annotates it as a *mukhamazi* (APT *mukhammas* 'poem in quintains'). d I; B *ar*. e I; B *rom aravin*.

²³ Morus Hasrat'yan, *Sayat'-Nova, hayeren, vratz'eren, adrbejaneren khagheri zhoghovatsu*, Haypetrat: Erevan, 1963, p. 111.

ert'i stiqa^f k'art'uli mak'vs, tz'otakhans^g karzed gamdoi.
shveli khar da jeirani^h, marali khar, daginakho.

Gamokhvel da daginakhe, zilp'i ch'oganis chirime!
datsnuli da dausnavi t'mebi rehanis chirime!
ert'nairi ch'amoskhmulu sigrdzisa tanis chirime!
gikhdeba gulis pirzeda ghili marjanis chirime!
margalitis k'indzis t'avo, ra laliⁱ khar, daginakho.

Eg sheni lamazi t'avi maseshi^j gagikhvevia.
me rom male^k momishore^l, visashi gagikvevia?
ok'ros ambarch'a mushanbis k'isashi gagikhvevia.
atlasshia, kharashia, khasashi gagikhvevia.
ra gidzes^m dibas boghch'ashiaⁿ, dalali khar — daginakho!

Gazap'khuloba movida, ragha^o ot'akhis dro aris.
gap'enila ia vardi, akhla ki baghis dro aris.
motseuli t'ut'a-baghi, khili^p, mebaghis^q dro aris.
kheivanze mze tsamodga, t'it'k'mis^r shuadghis dro aris.
sayat'nova^s daach'rdile^t, t'alali^u khar, daginakho!

'Maybe you will summon me. You are the new moon^a, let me gaze upon you!

What a sapphire^b, a diamond, a ruby you are! Let me gaze upon you!

f B; I *tsut'i* **g** B; I *tz'otakha*. **h** B *shveli khar t'u jeirani*; I *shveli khar da jeirani khar*, one syllable too many unless *-ei-* has been read as one syllable. **i** Acceptably amended by Hasrat'yan and Gaysaryan from I *alali*, very doubtful as being the rhyme word of the first stanza; B *ra t'vali*, a less satisfactory emendation. **j** *mase* 'fishing net' (Ch'ubinashvili, Meckelein, not in Tschenkeli), amended from I and B *makhe* 'trap, net to catch fish, birds, animals' (Ch', Tsch, M), which does not rhyme; I and B have doubtless read *ḡ s* as *ḡ kh*, in cursive script but for an iota identical; *masa* 'mass' would give a better rhyme (though not a better meaning), but it is a modern loan from Russian *massa* 'stuff, material, quantity', listed by Tsch and Ch'ik'obava. **k** I; B *ase*. **l** B; I *momishorve*. **m** I; B *gidevs*. **n** B; I *bokhch'a-* (TP *bughchah*, Az *boghja*). **o** B; I *ra*, semantically and metrically insufficient. **p** IB; asyndetic: one might have expected **t'ut'a-baghis khili* (*t'ut'is baghis khili* would be better) 'fruit of the mulberry garden', but a caesura dividing a semantic group must have been considered unacceptable. **q** B; I *mebaghisa*, one syllable too many. **r** B; I *om*, leaving the hemistich two syllables short. **s** B; I *sayadnoma*, the third character written in Armenian script *յ* instead of Georgian *ო* *i* or (not in modern usage) *ყ* *y*. **t** B; I *t'alali*; for *t'alari*, B with metathesis. I with assimilation, possibly genuine popular forms otherwise unlisted, possibly rhythmi gratia.

a Although (*h*)*alali* is listed in the dictionaries only (*a*) as the equivalent of APTAz *ḥalāl* '(ritually) legitimate, permitted, just' and (*b*) as *alali* 'kestrel', here it can only be from APT *halāl* 'new moon'. As one steeped in Persian imagery, SN would be well aware of the use of this last with reference to the beloved (e.g. *halāl-abrû* 'with eyebrows arched like the new moon', *halāl-manzar* 'moon-faced', S). A pun on *ḥalāl* in the sense of 'you are legitimate for me' is not beyond him, however. **b** I *iagundi* (the more usual form), B *iaqut'i*, are borrowed from APTAz *yâqût* (itself from Gk *hyákinthos*) which frequently

I fear that you may do me harm, you are so majestic!^c Let me gaze upon you!

I am the Nightingale, I seek the Rose. You are the Kestrel, let me gaze upon you!

Do not be worried, my dear one. Come forth at [a time of your] choosing. (Silk) mats-beneath-your-feet befit you. Come forth on brocade, on gold. No-one will see you^d. Come forth under veil and with a bodyguard^e.

I have one word^f in Georgian (to say). [Just] for a moment come to your door!

You are a hind and^g a gazelle. You are a red-deer. Let me gaze upon you!

You have come out and I have gazed upon you. For your polo-stick kiss-curl let me die!

For your plaited and braided basil-scented hair, let me die!

For the evenly-fashioned^h length of your body, let me die!

The coral button on your bodice befits you. For it let me die!

O pearl-headed pin, you are a ruby.ⁱ Let me gaze upon you!

That beautiful head of yours you have turned into a trap^j.

That I might quickly^k escape, [say] into whom you have turned.

A golden necklace you have turned into (something not worth more than) an oil-cloth purse!^l

denotes a 'ruby' (the use of *la'l* in the same verse makes this meaning tautologous), but can mean also 'hyacinth' or 'any precious stone'; G *iagundi* is similarly vague ('Edelstein, gemeinsamer Name für Rubin und Saphir', Tsch). c *jalali*, APT *jalâlî*, Az *jalalli*, 'majestic, glorious', from APT *jalâl* 'power, majesty splendour', cf. P *'ism-i jalâlî* 'one of the terrible attributes of the deity', S; there is doubtless here also an allusion to PT *jalâlî*, a follower of the rebel Jalâl Bukhârî, and by extension any rebel and dangerous person. d I; B 'in order that no-one might see you'. e *nap'ar*, APT *nafar* 'a crowd, a mass of people, a small party of less than ten people' (R), Az *nâfâr* 'person, individual' (Ä). f B; I *tsut'i* 'moment', which makes no sense, the epithet *k'art'uli* referring to the Georgian language. Hasrat'yan's 'I want to recite you a rubai'yat' (p. 111), and Gaysaryan's 'I want to read you verses' (p. 181) are fanciful. g I; B 'or' (unjustified). The verse is of the tritest, but Hasrat'yan's 'improvement', 'You are of earth, you are of fire' (p. 111), and Gaysaryan's 'You are a daughter of earth or heaven' (p. 181) are illegitimate tamperings with common SN images. h *ch'amoskhmulî* 'poured out' (as metal or glass). H's 'slender waist, cypress shape, ivory neck' and G's 'the curve and whiteness of your swanlike neck' get the idea, but lay it on too thick. i I's *alali* 'falcon', repeating the rhyme of the first stanza, cannot be correct. B amends to *ra t'vali*, presumably 'like an eye', i.e. 'as dear to me as my eye, the apple of my eye', cf. *ch'emo t'valis sinat'le* 'O light of my eye' (SN Arm *ach'ki lus*), 'du mein alles' (Meckelein), cf. A *yâ 'aynî* 'O my eye', 'my beloved'. G *t'vali* is not used as Arm *akn* 'eye, jewel, spring'. H and G translate as though the text read *ra lali* 'like a ruby' which, although a pearl is only in the widest sense anything like a ruby (and APT *la'l* means only that, unlike *yâqûr*), is in accordance with SN's habit of mixing metaphors, fits the rhyme scheme, and is acceptable as an emendation. j Cf. the use with respect to the beloved's coiffure of G *khap'angi* 'trap' (from T *kapan* 'trap') in *Patkirk'ët ghalamov k'ashats*, st. 1 v. 2, and commentary in 'A song by Sayat'-Nova', *Raft*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 32-34. For the image, cf. French *accroche-cœur* 'kiss-curl'. k I; B 'thus', weak. l *mushanbi* for *mushambi*

You (yourself) you have turned into satin, moiré, and silk.
 [To] what lies^m in your brocade bundle, you are my guide. Let me gaze
 upon you!

Spring has come. Come out of your room. It is time.
 The violet and the rose have flowered. Now is the time for the garden.
 The mulberry-orchard, [its] fruitⁿ has ripened. Now is the time of the gar-
 dener.

The sun has risen high over the alley of trees. It is almost^o the time of noon.
 Give Sayat'-Nova^p shade. You are an harbour. Let me gaze upon you!'

This charming springtime ('the only pretty ring time') invocation to the beloved is probably a favourite among the Georgians. It is the very first song that Ioane transcribed in his manuscript, and, though this may be fortuitous and of no significance as to its esteem, it came to be graced by an interpolated ownership notice by the Crown Prince T'eimurazi. Full of traditional images of the beloved's beauty, it contains, as we have come to expect of Sayat'-Nova, elements that do not seem entirely innocent. The beloved is traditionally the Rose, who is wooed by the Nightingale, with whom the poet identifies himself. The Falcon is usually the enemy of the couple, with which one may compare a similar concern in the Lithuanian daina: 'My little mother has two cherry gardens. Do not fly in, little hawk; do not disturb the nightingale'.²⁴ Here the beloved herself is called the Falcon, as a potential bringer of harm to the lover. The same is true of her description as *jalali*, which may be interpreted both as 'majestic' and 'dangerous terrorist'. The poem is not devoid of physical eroticism, however delicately expressed: that which lies in the beloved's brocade bundle to which the poet hopes to be led needs no commentary. The statement that the richly adorned beloved has turned a gold necklace into a purse made of oil-cloth appears to denote a rather surprising opposite of the Midas touch. Hasrat'yan renders 'How do you keep a golden necklace in a common purse of waxed cotton?',²⁵ a good question (not in the original), though the suggestion of a

'waxed cloth' ('Wachstuch', M, Tsch), a corruption of APT *mushamma*^o 'waxed, wax-cloth, cerecloth' (S); some parenthesis such as supplied above seems necessary. **m** I; B 'is placed'. **n** Perhaps 'the fruit of the mulberry garden'. **o** B; I om. **p** B; I *sayat'noma*. This Georgian version of the poet's pseudonym, virtually identical to the *saadnama* used by T'eimurazi, the sponsor of I's MS (see pp. 15, 412 n. 28), in his note between stanzas 1 and 2 on fol. 1, is somewhat surprising as used by the poet's own son.

²⁴ A. Juška (ed.), *Lietuviškos dainos*, t. I, no. 372, reprinted Kaunas, 1954, pp. 710-711.

²⁵ *Ôske ôghên vuntz' is pahum kham k'at'ani mumats k'isum*, p. 111.

comparison of the beloved with such a purse, even *via negativa*, could count as indiscreet. In the translation above the verse has been interpreted as meaning that her own worth is so great that in comparison a golden necklace has no more value than a cheap purse. But one is by now well accustomed to teasing ambiguities in Sayat'-Nova, so that the suspicion arises that in all this adulation, the poet is suddenly moved to give a swipe with the dish-cloth. Unlikely as that may seem, the literal meaning of the phrase must have suggested the reverse of flattery to the poet's Georgian audience, who might well have remembered Sayat'-Nova's description of himself as a *khumari* or joker, and begun to wonder, perhaps with dire consequences to his career at court (especially if one of their number was the King himself), how much of his flattering Georgian verse was tongue-in-cheek. One can imagine, called to account, the poet protesting the innocence of his remark, but that we all know what these painted Georgian ladies are, and if the cap fits ... But perhaps we are letting our imagination run away with us.

Another *Ra ik'neba* 'How would it be perhaps?' poem, a wishful-thinking genre, is extant in two versions by Ioane and Baramidze.²⁶ Ioane's version has the usual five stanzas, that of Baramidze only four, and Ioane records a first stanza of six verses to the five of Baramidze, Hasrat'yan in his translation following Baramidze.²⁷ Ioane's extra stanza is defective in comprising only four verses instead of the required five, and by its banality (the fourth verse referring to the beloved's copious supply of wine borders on the fatuous) contributes little to the charm of the poem; the same may safely be said of his two verses to Baramidze's one in the first stanza. But since it is possible that these variants derive from the hand of the poet, perhaps in an early draft, they cannot be ignored. In his annotation at the end of the poem Ioane writes that it was recited with reference to an ardent (*gulp'itz'khi* "hot-hearted", 'amorously enthusiastic') friend, doubtless *amie*.²⁸ Ioane makes many

²⁶ I fol. 10, B pp. 53-54.

²⁷ H p. 108, and note to no. 11, p. 260.

²⁸ *Ese saiat'nomas ert'i gulp'itz'khi megobari hakhlia imaze ut'k'oms* 'This (is) by Saiat'noma, he possesses one ardent friend, he recites this upon her'. Hasrat'yan, noting that the song appeared in Armenian translation in *Almanakh* (no place or date given), pp. 41-42, translates Ioane's note as 'Sayat'-Nova has a close (*srtakitz'*) dear (*aziz* [misreading *imaze*?]) friend, he composed this song upon her. It is to be sung in the *mukhammazi* mode', p. 260. No words after *ut'k'oms* 'he recites for her' are in my photocopy of Ioane's manuscript, which ends with that word and seems to contain all that is now on fol. 10r; if any others were there, they must now have been trimmed off.

such remarks, however. In the next poem in his collection, which is of like intent, 'Come, I beg of you', he notes that 'This is recited to his friend and she has closed her door to him; he remains in misery (and) bitterly says this to her'.²⁹ This describes a sorry sequel to our present poem, but whether the friend was real or imaginary, it is impossible to say for sure: but one suspects the latter.

*Ra ik'neba ert'khel ch'vens mokhvide.
mt'varesavit^a binidan ch'amokhvide.
mertz'khalivit^c karebidan gakhvide.^b
me ar minda^c, shen ubralod dakhvide,
shens pirsu utz'khus daanakhvide.*

*Qovel dilas^d gamovide, mze viqo.
t'k'vens ezoshi gadarguli khe viqo.
mogindebi tz'uls nu damkrav, de viqo.
sheni^e piris mezobeli me viqo.
shens salkhlsavit^c ch'vens sakhlschia^f shakhvide.*

*Shimshatis chev tsamtsameba, bzat^g iqos.
ert'i sak'tz'iveli sheni gzat^c iqos.
sheni sup'ra(s) sanzadari^h mzat^c iqos.
ghvinisat^c vis maranshi ar ch'akhvide.*

*Mouklavi katz'iⁱ shen ar mogrch'eba.
modi mit'khar, sheni ch'emzed ra rch'eba.
ch'emi dardⁱ shen arasdros^k shegrch'eba.
silamaze tsava, artz' shen^l dagrch'eba,
varsklavivit^c t'u gind^m tz'ashi akhvide.*

*Saiat'novovⁿ, zarbabzeda, zarzeda,
khalat'ivit^c gadaigde^o mkharzeda.
vah,^p t'u bolos damitsuno gvarzeda.
monasavit^c davegdebi karzeda,
gaiaro, mitsasavit^c mlakhvide.*

a B; I mertz'khalivit'. **b** B; I has two verses here: *zardis mazo iasamazed akhvide. vit'u male maili o tsakhvide.* **c** B; I *ar minda rom.* **d** B; I *dilazed* (giving one syllable too many for the hendecasyllabic verse). **e** B; I *shens* (one syllable too few). **f** B; I *sakhshia.* **g** This stanza only in I. **h** for *sazandari.* **i** B; I *i katz'i mouklavi* [better *mukvlavi*]. **j** B; I *es ch'emi naghveli.* **k** B; I *ar.* **l** B; I *shen ar.* **m** B; I *t'ugind masklamsavit'.* **n** I; B *sayat'nova.* **o** B; I *gadikhvit'.* **p** B; I *vai.*

²⁹ In *Akhla modi, genatz'valo me shena*, fol. 10A, not in B (see above, n. 11: *Ese t'avisi megobars moutqvelia da kari dauketavs, satz'adavat' darch'omili mtsared imazed ut'k'oms.*

How would that be? Do thou meet with us.
 Like the moon^a shine down from [thy] dwelling.
 Like the swallow come down from the doorway^b.
 I do not wish — come down modestly [veiled] —
 That thou shouldst show thy face to a stranger.

The whole day long I shall rise [and] be a sun [for thee].
 Planted in your (*pl.*) courtyard, I shall be a tree.
 Deignst thou not to strike me with the axe, I shall be there [still].
 Neighbour to thy person [*lit.* face] shall I be.
 Come into our house as into thine own house.

The *shimshat* tree shimmers, it will be a box-tree^c.
 Only [its] deportment will be [a model] for thy way.
 A minstrel shall stand ready at thy table.
 For wine do not go into the cellar.

Unslain, a man does not come away from thee.
 Come, tell me, what of thee remains [left] to me?
 My suffering thou wilt never heal.
 Beauty passes, nor shall thine remain,
 Though it [now] shines like a star in the sky!

Sayat'-Nova, [thou] on brocade, on gold,
 As it were a gown is thrown round [thy] shoulder.
 Alas, if in the end she condemn me concerning [my] family.
 Like a slave I shall throw myself down at [thy] door.
 Thou shalt pass by. Tread on me as on [so much] dust!

Some idea of the original may be given by the following rendering, which preserves the rhyme-scheme and the hendecasyllabic metre. Syllabic metre is not common in English, but was known to Shakespeare in his Sonnets, and was more recently a form of verse adopted by Dylan Thomas.

Come to us. Perhaps we may a way devise.
 Come down when Moon and Stars in the heavens rise.
 Dart swift as the Swallow which from the eaves flies.
 Let the darkness of Night thy beauty disguise,
 Lest our Love be betrayed to another's eyes.

The livelong day like a Sun I'll shine on thee.
 I'll stand in your courtyard like a shady tree.

a B; I 'like the swallow'. **b** B: I has two verses here: 'O mezze (*hors d'œuvre*) of saffron rice [P *zarda*^h 'rice dressed with honey and saffron', S] on jasmin, come down. Like one swift and strong [*maili*, T *māya*^h *lī* 'leavened, possessed of substance, strength, wealth, nobility, or value', R], oh, come down'. **c** P *shimshād* is 'any tall and upright tree', including the 'box-tree', and is an image for 'the graceful figure of a mistress', S. This stanza, defective by one verse, is omitted by B.

If thine axe fell me not, I shall flourish free.
 Thus thy constant neighbour I shall ever be.
 Make our house thine own house, my hopeful heart cries!

The Poplar shimmers. The box-tree, graceful, tall,
 Is a model for beauteous maidens all.
 Musicians stand ready at thy beck and call.
 What profusion of wine on thy table lies!

Many a man's heart for love of thee hath bled.
 What have I of thee? My verses are unread.
 Thou heal'st not the pain in my heart and my head.
 Know that Beauty once passed is forever fled,
 Though today it shine bright as stars in the skies.

Thy verses, Sayat'-Nova, are writ in gold.
 May they thy shoulders like a silk shawl enfold.
 Though my birth be humble, I beg, do not scold.
 I'll lie at thy door like a slave bought and sold.
 To be dust 'neath thy feet I shall deem a prize!

Hasrat'yan's four-stanza Armenian version³⁰ preserves the rhyme-scheme and metre, takes few liberties with the Georgian text, and by its elegant charm succeeds in giving the impression of an original Armenian poem by Sayat'-Nova.

Another effective Georgian love-song, (*Me*) *shent'ana siqvaruli mak'vs* 'With you I know Love', strangely omitted by Hasrat'yan from his selection of the Georgian songs in his Armenian translation, 32 in number, also illustrates the uncertainty of the textual tradition. Both the version presented by Ioane³¹ and Baramidze³² display such metrical irregularities that they cannot constitute an exact record of the original by Sayat'-Nova. The most regular verses can be analysed as composed 8 + 7 syllables, a metre commonly adopted by SN in his Armenian poems. Already the first verse, however, is by any normal standard irregular, being apparently composed of 14 (9 + 5) syllables in Baramidze's version, and 17 (9 + 7) syllables in Ioane's. One can achieve regularity by omitting the otiose *Me*, and by accepting Ioane's *metad* in the second hemistich, thus reading *Shent'ana siqvaruli mak'vs, metad didi khania*, i.e. a verse of 8 + 7 syllables. The following version, based upon Ioane's and Baramidze's texts, amends these by adding, in parentheses, extra syllables necessary to the metre as interpreted above, and by other procedures mentioned in the notes.

³⁰ P. 108.

³¹ I fol. 8.

³² P. 75.

Shent'ana^a siqvaruli mak'vs, metad^b didi khania.
vertz'khlo, [shen] utsindeli khar, ok'ro[d] dagibania.
khilebi margalits gigavs, ok'rod dagibania.^c
kashkasheb[s], mt'varev, mzasasvit' khmelet's dzalit' p[r]chqvinia.^d
sul[atz']^e k'veqanas ach'rdilebs sheni turp'a tania.

Turp'a sakhe damanakhe, t'u rom ch'emi ara khar.
[shen] isansa^f gamovlilo, gazap'khulis k'ari khar.
venetikis ialduzo, turp'ad^g gadamdgari khar.
ok'ros tsqli^t gadmop'erilo^h, zed gak'vas zarnishania.

Sheni nakhvis natruli var,ⁱ qovelt'vis vzivar, vtiri.^j
sitqva-pasukhi kargi gak'vs, gashvenebs^k ok'ros piri.
shveli khar t'u jerani khar^l, genatz'vlos^m velt' nadiri.
emist'anaⁿ monadire bevri tsagiqvania.

Ar miqvars orguli iari, nap'itz'i^o var, mit'k'vams ndoba.
rasatz' p'ers zarbabs ch'aitz'vam, tanshi gamogetsqobe.
diakh, metad Iamazi khar, silamazem gojoba.
ratz'[a]^p tsams momagonebi, pirtsqali^q dameshroba.
saiat'nova[sa] qmit^r shensa survils auqvania.

It will be clearly seen from the apparatus that Ioane's version is metrically more accurate than Baramidze's, which is an untypical circumstance.

A literal translation of the poem would be

With you I know [*lit. have*] Love. It has been too long a time [*and/or* it is a very great prince]^s

a I; B *me shent'ana*. **b** I; B *om*, with defective metre. **c** The repetition of *dagibania* as a 'rhyme' is weak, and invites emendation. **d** I *khmelet's adzlevav pchqvinian*; B *khmelet's adzlev brtsqinvasa*. The verse above is necessarily amended. Taking the last verb to be a perfect, its 'subject', *kashkasheb(i)*, must be dative *kashkashebs*. The verb *adzlev* seems intrusive; *dzalit'* 'with power' is possible. I's plural perfect form in *-ian* is not justified, "plurals" in *-ebi*, being in fact collective singulars: read therefore *pchqvinia*; though still not a good rhyme, it is to be preferred to B's *brtsqinvasa*, a noun ('shining') in the dative, which does not rhyme at all. **e** B *sul*; I *su*; amended to *sulatz'*, metri gratia. **f** B *isansa*, dat. of *isan*, a common form in SN for APTAz *insân* (cf. the common Arm. *ishalla* for APTAz *inshâ'llâh*; I *isdzar* (?)). **g** B; I *turp'a*. **h** I; B *dap'erilo*, metrically a syllable short. **i** I *var*, metrically necessary; B *om*. **j** I; B *vzivar da vtiri*, one syllable too many. **k** B; I *ashvenebs*. **l** I *khar*, metrically necessary; B *om*. **m** I, B *genatz'valos*, one syllable too many: the amended form above with syncopated *-a-* is acceptable. **n** B *emis-* (K'art'li dialect for the usual *amis-*); I *ch'emist'ana*. **o** I *nap'itz'i*, metrically necessary; B *om* (wrongly punctuating as *orguli, iari var*). **p** Amended from I *ratz'*, B *ra*, metrically insufficient. **q** B; I *pirt'sqali* (spelling mistake). **r** Amended on I *saiat'nova qma*, the dative *saiat'novas* required as 'subject' of the perfect *auqvania*; *qma* (I writes the ancient *q* carefully: modern *khma* 'voice') can mean 'be quiet!' (Tsch), but is amended above to *qmit'* 'with his voice' as more in keeping with SN's usual style; B *ma* (dialectal for *mash(a)?*). **s** The pun on G *khan-i* 'time'

O silver one, (as you) were [*lit.* are] formerly, (though now) you have bathed in gold.

Your teeth are like pearls [still, though] you have bathed in gold.

Your rays, O Moon, like the Sun have powerfully illumined the Earth.

Your beautiful body puts the world wholly in the shade.

Beautiful countenance, look down upon me, though you are not mine alone.

You who have come down to Mankind, you are the breath of Spring.

Indoratura^t of Venice, in beauty you stand alone.

O one coloured in golden water, you bear upon you golden patterns.

I long for the sight of you. For all that I sit, I weep.

Your conversation is good, it adorns your golden mouth.

You are a doe, or a gazelle. The wild game of the field will stand in [as sacrifices] for you.

The huntsman has driven ten thousand such^u to you.

I do not love the faithless lover. I have taken a vow.^v I am trusted.

Why do you wear bright colours and gold brocade, and wrap them round you?

Truly, you are too beautiful, your beauty excels [all others].

When it flashes on my memory, my self-respect vanishes [*lit.* the water-of-(my)-face, PT *âb-i rû*, 'honour', dries up].

[But] out loud [*lit.* by (his) voice]^w Sayat'-Nova has carried out your wishes.

A short love-song that Ioane annotates as translated from the Tatar, i.e. Azeri,³³ is consigned by Baramidze to his Appendix, where it has been somewhat cavalierly treated. Baramidze calls the text corrupt, and omits the first stanza recorded by Ioane as 'stricken through and erased',³⁴ though only one word has been stricken out, and that clearly by mistake, since it is the main rhyme (*radîf*). Reference has been made above to Baramidze's excessive severity towards a reading by

and PTazGArm *khân* 'prince, lord' (*amor vincit omnia* or with reference to a noble lover?) is doubtless intentional. **t** *ialduz*, **T** *yaldız* 'gilding'. The intricate golden patterns on leather and glass will be familiar to every visitor to Venice even today. In his (otherwise exceedingly unliteral) Russian translation apud Gaysaryan, p. 166, A. Tarkovski assumes that the reference is to a Venetian textile (*tkan' venetsianskaya*). **u** B; I 'as me'. **v** I; B 'I do not love the faithless. I am a beloved' (nonsensical and unmetrical). **w** Reading *qmit'* for I *qma* 'voice' (hardly in its meaning of 'be silent!', incongruous here), B *ma*, dialectal (K'art'li, K'akhet'i, the expected dialects noted by Tsch) for *mash(a)* 'thus, now, then'. The verse in any case needs metrical emendation; see note r.

³³ I fol. 13.

³⁴ *gadokhazul-tsashlilitz'*, p. 91.

M. Ch'ik'ovani which the latter has clearly, though not altogether accurately, taken straight from Ioane.³⁵ The text of the poem, followed by a literal English translation, reads as follows.

Sheni ch'emt'an mosvla ra mitz'odnia.^a
ra uqav tom vardi mogekhseneba.
kit'khet' mas mati, ra mitz'odnia.
mit'k'vams tsut' k'mariba mogekhseneba.^b

Davgizhdi zghvasavit', ei ara mare.
shesulkhar bakhch'ashi, ei ara mare.
ma rad momatqvele^c, ei ara mare.
rodis aris sheni mogekhseneba.

Gamodi mzesavit' shemtz'dari unda.
momparavs^d tsqalzeda shemtz'dari unda.
shens pirs shemkhedavs^e shemtz'dari unda.
t'u rom^f ese ch'emgan mogekhseneba.

Almasis bechedo sasakhelot'a.
turp'ad lamazi khar saskhelot'a.
saiat'nova m[t']k'vian^g sasakhelot'a,
ratz'a bdzandebode^h mogekhseneba.

Of thy coming with me, what did I know?
 What didst thou do to her, that thou knowest the Rose?
 Ye have asked too much of her. What did I know?
 She tells me thou must know the marriage of a moment.ⁱ

I drowned as (in) the sea. Oh no! Away!^j
 Thou hast entered the garden. Oh, no! Away!
 Why, then, didst thou applaud me? Oh, no! Away!
 Never is there (then) thy 'Thou knowest'!^k

a This stanza is in I, but omitted as deleted and corrupt by B. **b** This last word, the *radif* rhyme, is struck through with a thick stroke of a pen; he -ba of the preceding word is written underneath. **c** Amended from I *mamat'qv(e)le*, a lapsus calami; B *momatqville*. **d** Amended from I *mopar(a)s*; B *mparavs*, but there is a vowel, necessary to the metre, in I between the first two letters; B expresses astonishment at Ch'ik'ovani's form *mparas*, which he has taken from I, though misreading it in a different way from B. **e** Amended, as the 'subject' of *unda*, from I, B *shemkhedavi*. **f** I; B *t'orem*. **g** Amended from I *saiat'novam k'vian*; B *sayat'novam vt'k'vi*, one syllable too few. **h** I; B *bdzandebode*. **i** If one has read Ioane's script correctly. **j** *mare* 'go away, be off!' (Ch', beside *mari* 'beregis', *postoronis*, *podì proch*'; M *mari* 'beware' (hüte dich!); not in Tsch). **k** The construction is unexpected, but it is difficult otherwise to place the possessive pronoun *sheni* 'thy'.

³⁵ Above, p. 406, n. 20. Baramidze (p. 75) does not give a page number or any other details of Ch'ik'ovani's publication.

Come down like the Sun. It needs one-to-be-dazzled.¹
 One who steals over water needs one-to-be-dazzled.
 He who beholds thy countenance must needs (be) one-to-be-dazzled.
 If thou only^m knowest this from me!

O diamond ring, (one) of the (most) renowned!
 Thou art fair and beautiful, (one) of the (most) renowned.
 They call me, Sayat'-Nova,ⁿ (one) of the (most) renowned,
 What thou mayst be, thou knowest!

Ioane has not misrepresented the nature of this poem in annotating it as a *tejnisi* 'allegory', for it is full of several sorts of difficulties. One can appreciate why Baramidze rejected the first stanza as corrupt, although one has no justification in making difficulties disappear by sweeping them under the editorial carpet. The situation hinted at in this first stanza implies some act inimical to the Rose, i.e. the Beloved. The *tsut' k'mariba* 'marriage of a moment' (if one has deciphered Ioane's script correctly; cf. *tsut'isop'eli* "the world of a moment", 'transitory existence', a concept dear to Sayat'-Nova)³⁶ seems to refer, like the phrase 'what didst thou do to her?', to seduction and abandonment, a theme otherwise without parallel in Sayat'-Nova's other work, in which the Rose is too exalted and aloof to suffer humiliation, a fate reserved for the Nightingale. The presence of the theme here may truly mean the poem was, as Ioane states, translated from the Azeri. *Türkü*'s sung by female performers of the type *Beni bırakma* 'Do not abandon me' may be heard in Turkish cabarets today. There are in the poem some features of Georgian grammar which, though complicated, need to be considered for an exact appreciation of both of what is being said, and what influences there have been upon it. The refrain rhyme-word *mogekhseneba* 'thou knowest', thou shouldst/must know' recalls the refrain *gitenak'* 'may ye know' of a purely Armenian poem by Sayat'-Nova,³⁷ so that there may be no need to search for extraneous sources. The poet does not here use the common word for 'thou knowest' (*itz'i*)

I *shemtz'dari* 'gone astray, errant, sinful, misled' (*sh. chkuazed* 'wandering in the mind, confused'), Ch', Tsch. m I *t'u rom* ('wenn nur', Tsch); B *t'orem* 'otherwise' ('sonst, ander(e)nfalls', Tsch, M). n Amending I slightly, as above n. g; B (one syllable short) 'I, Sayat'-Nova, said'.

³⁶ "Minutenwelt", '(das kurzfristige) Erdenleben', Tsch; *Ashkharēs miz mēnalū ch'ē* 'This world will not remain unto us', in *Ashkharēs me p'anjara ē*, st. 4 v. 1, T p. 133, I fol. 63A, H p. 70, etc.

³⁷ *Indz u im sirekan yarin me tari berats gitenak'*, T p. 127, H p. 75.

used elsewhere,³⁸ and basically the verb means ‘it will be recalled by thee’,³⁹ which may remind one of a famous poem by Ḥâfîz with the refrain *yâd bâd* ‘may it be remembered (by thee)’;⁴⁰ although the contents of the two poems are very different, it is not inconceivable that Sayat⁻Nova knew the Persian poem and took it as a theme, without any direct borrowing.

The subsequent stanzas reflect the traditional and obligatory suffering of the male lover, who praises the beloved’s beauty and beseeches her to join him. Though mainly conventional, they are not without obscurities. ‘He who steals over water’ may be the Sun, which thereby misleads, dazzles, by its reflection, like the beloved by her beauty. The next verse refers to the lover, distracted, as tradition demands, rendered *majnûn*, by her beauty, but can it be he who, Leander-like, steals over water (the verb, which has two meanings as in English, ‘to rob’ and ‘to move like a thief, stealthily’, cf. Arm. *gogh i gogh*)? We are in the world of allegory, and it might just be that Sayat⁻Nova composed the poem, or chose it for translation from the Azeri, as relevant to a situation of his own, real or imagined. The only water that might have separated the real-life poet from a real mistress would be the river Kur through Tiflis, or the Yori between Tiflis and T⁻elavi, or these two and Alazani between Enzelli and Western Tiflis — all insignificant compared to the Bosphorus. One must oneself beware of being dazzled by Sayat⁻Nova’s enigmas, but the identification of the stealthy mover over water lies with one or other of these three alternatives.

After lauding the Beloved’s great renown, in the final stanza Sayat⁻Nova uses his *takhalluṣ* to refer to his own fame, for Ioane’s version must be preferred to Baramidze’s grammatically rationalised but unmetrical emendation, which says virtually nothing. ‘What thou mayst be, thou knowest’ recalls the Armenian adage, ‘The world calls you “Sir”, but you yourself know your worth’, but the final verse must be addressed to the Beloved because of the verb he uses for ‘thou art’, viz. the subjunctive of *b(r)dzandeba*, a passive of *brdzaneba* ‘command’, which is a

³⁸ *Ra zarbabi, ra atlasi, ra zari var, itz’i gana?*, B p. 47.

³⁹ *mogekhseneba(t’)* ‘dir/Ihnen dürfte bekannt sein (dass), du weisst (od. Sie wissen) (dass), Tsch, p. 2394b, beside *gakhsendeba* ‘thou recallest’ (*makhsendeba* ‘mir steigt jemand/etwas in der Erinnerung auf’, Tsch *ibid*), *ikhseneb* ‘thou recallest’ (*vikhseneb* ‘sich etwas ins Gedächtnis rufen’, Tsch p. 2394a).

⁴⁰ *Rûz-i vaṣl-i dostdârân yâd bâd / yâd bâd ân rûzgarân yâd bâd* ‘Remember the day (we) friends met, Remember those days, remember’, ed. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 50. The repetitions ensure that this a poem one will not easily forget.

polite formula for 'to be' used in addressing persons to whom one wishes to show respect, and not when referring to oneself.⁴¹ If the poet addressed himself alone, he would have used the normal *khar* 'thou art'. But taking the statement to be, as well as an address to the beloved, one of general application, it would subsume the poet also: ambiguity, as we all know by now, is in Sayat'-Nova's blood.

This poem, though it does not contribute greatly to Sayat'-Nova's renown, illustrates the problems posed by his work. The above tentative translation may have, if no other, the merit of leading to an identification, if Ioane is to be believed on this point, of the original Azeri, a search through available Azeri poetry having proved as yet fruitless. One must not look for a poem beginning, as Baramidze's version might lead one to think, say, *sanki dāryada boghuldum* 'I drowned as in the sea' (a common situation for oriental swains), but something like **mān gālishini bilmādim* 'I knew not of your coming to me'.

Which hypothesis may serve to lead us to the facts of Sayat'-Nova's actual Azeri compositions.

⁴¹ See H. Vogt, *Grammaire de la langue géorgienne [moderne]*, Oslo, 1971, §2.95, p. 143; *norvegieli brdzandebit*? 'Are you Norwegian', to which the polite answer ('quand on s'adresse à une personne à qui l'on veut montrer du respect') *norvegieli gakhlavart* 'I am Norwegian' uses a verb doubtless connected with *akhlo* 'near' ('*akhlays* fournit des formes relatives qui manquent au verbe *aris*' — [more particularly, which are substituted for *var* 'I am', *vart* 'we are', *aris* 'he is', *arian* 'they are', in polite discourse]. M lists the common *rogor brdzandebit* 'how are you?', beside the cognate *brdzanet* 'please' ('command!', cf. P *bi-farmâ'id*, Arm *h(r)ametz'ek*, T *buyurun*).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE AZERI POEMS

The majority of the poems and songs of the Armenian minstrel at the Georgian court are in the social, commercial and also artistic *lingua franca* of the Caucasus, Azeri Turkish, in which *âshiq*'s of all nationalities of the region would be expected to perform. The profound musical influence may be gauged by the number of important Armenian songs that Sayat'-Nova annotates as having sung to Azeri tunes. One may count 128 Azeri poems of his against 63 Armenian, 35 Georgian, and 6 Russian: moreover, there are 2 macaronic poems in Azeri and Armenian, and one in which Azeri hemistichs are employed together with hemistichs in Armenian, Georgian, and Persian (the Poem in Four Languages), while one poem in Georgian, as we have just seen, may be a translation from the Azeri.¹ Thus there are roughly 20% more Azeri poems than all the others put together. Despite this preponderance, however, Gaysaryan could write in 1961, and the past 30 odd years have not changed the situation, that 'they have been the least textually studied [of all his poems], part of them being still not deciphered, nor has there been a complete edition of [any of] the texts'.² Arasli presented texts for 40,³ but unfortunately the imperfections of his edition, with many unwarranted emendations, justify Gaysaryan's criticism, and illustrate the difficulty of establishing an exact record of this important area of Sayat'-Nova's activity. The Azeri texts in the *Tetrak*, the earliest record, are sometimes in Armenian, but far more often in Georgian, script, and are clearly written.

¹ Given the uncertainty of the tradition, the figures cannot be entirely accurate. Gaysaryan counts 114 Azeri, 70 Armenian, and 32 Georgian. Hasrat'yan lists 81 Azeri (plus a possible further three collected by G. T'arverdyan alias Ashugh Verdi, and the two Azeri-Armenian macaronics from the *Tetrak*, pp. 7-9, his nos. 60 and 61), 63 Armenian (plus a possible further three collected by T'arverdyan and the two Azeri-Armenian macaronics; see his pp. 254-258, 271-2), and 32 Georgian. 128 Azeri poems may be counted in the *Tetrak*.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 261. Tarkovski, Lipskerov, and Zvyagintseva between them render 42 Azeri poems into Russian verse.

³ H. Arasli, (ed.), *Sayatnova she'rläri*, Baku, 1963.

Those in Ioane's manuscript, 71 in number, are all in the Georgian script, but, as already pointed out, in a fluent but minute and often careless hand that makes even his Georgian difficult to read, and justifies Gaysaryan's use of the verb 'decipher'. One must again marvel at Ioane's quadrilingual memory (one must not forget the Russian songs), although, as has been mooted above, he may have had notebooks to aid him. The occasional weak verse (an example is verse 18 of the first poem presented below, note **bb**) may indicate that his memory has failed him. There are in any case many variations between Ioane's texts of 1823 and those in the *Tetrak* of 1766 in which his father probably had a hand, and subsequently, in 1963, Arasli made several unjustified emendations of his own. The task of collation is difficult. Not all Ioane's versions figure in the *Tetrak*, and vice versa, and it is not often that one can find an Azeri poem that is included in the *Tetrak*, Ioane's MS, Arasli's edition, and Hasrat'yan's Armenian translations. The song that follows, *Khialunda na var* 'What are you imagining?', is one that can be so found.⁴ In content (a *plainte*) and style (five quatrains, *murabba'*, of hendecasyllabic verses in compound rhyme, *radîf*), it is a typical Sayat'-Nova production, one can safely say 'run of the mill'. The Gaysaryan translators did not think it worthy of inclusion, and they may be justified. It is not, however, without a naive charm, but here it will serve mainly to illustrate what faces a would-be editor of a critical edition of the Azeri texts. The problems are far less than they are with respect to the poems of Sappho and Alcaeus. The variants are on the whole very minor. But the task of so editing more than a hundred Azeri poems, including some not in the main sources listed above, but in various Russian and Soviet periodicals on the whole inaccessible in the West, will explain why the present writer, whose principal interest lies in the poet's Armenian works, cannot, apart from his inexpertise in Azeri literature, undertake it. The best that can be done in this book in general is to note the more important variants. In the following piece, however, even unimportant variants have been noted, on the sound critical-text principal that the noting of minutiae gives the reader no false hope of finding any variant of major importance. As those of the older source, the readings of the *Tetrak* are given preference, but where Ioane's reading seems better,

⁴ *Tetrak*, p. 95; Ioane, fol. 33; Arasli, p. 36; Hasrat'yan, p. 164, abbreviated below as T, I, Ar, H respectively. I have transcribed Arasli's Cyrillic.

that has been adopted in the main text, as possibly, as we have said, being based on one of Sayat'-Nova's own notebooks. Those who prefer the German practice in text criticism of producing the readings of one manuscript *in toto* with variants from other manuscripts as footnotes will be able to reconstruct the *Tetrak* or Ioane version from the following text and apparatus, though for Arasli's version in modern Azeri one must consult his edition. No attempt is made to "correct" Sayat'-Nova's Azeri Turkish from the Georgian and Armenian scripts, which do not reproduce the vocalic harmonies and do not show the difference between *o*, *ö*; *u*, *ü*; *i*, *i*: to do so would be rash, since it is unlikely that the strict rules followed in literary Western Turkish obtained in the 18th-century Azeri of Georgia (see p. xv). The poems below are transliterated from the Georgian script of the originals:

Khialunda na var, ei^a nazani iar.
ikhtilat' et'marsan^b sazlarumizdan.
akh^c ch'ak'makhdan^d qara baghrum zai olmish.^e
qanlu^f selar^g akhar gozlarum[i]zdan.^h

Man biluram eshkha iakhasan.ⁱ
sinam usta qamzalarun t'akhasan,
na ola s.t'khinan bari bakhasan.
na t'ez ai got'urdun ozlarum[i]zdan.

Nich'un dinmeirsan^j navjivanum[i]z.^k
leimun^l t'ak'i suzmaginam^m qanum[i]z.ⁿ
lalvarmaghdan^o uzulubdur^p janun[i]z
haiadan^q qalmamish uzlarum[i]zdan.^r

Iar gelubdan ianum[i]zdan at'meir.
darmish qonch'a gulin^s dakh^t bit'meir.
amalum[i]zdan^u dur dakh^v tutmeir.
k'aramat' q[i]lmamish^w tuzlarum[i]zdan.^x

Istaram k'i eshkh ustina^y qoneim.^z
parvanatak' iar shamua^{aa} doneim^{bb}.

a T; Ar *ey*; I *e*. **b** I; T *et'masan*; Ar *etmirsän*. **c** I; Ar *ah*; T *agh*. **d** I; T *ch'ak'mak'dan*; Ar *chäkmäkdän*. **e** T; I *olmissh* (lapsus calami); Ar *olmush*. **f** T; I *qanli*; Ar *qanlı*. **g** T, I; Ar *sular*. **h** I; Ar *gözlärimizdän*; T *gozlarumiz da*. **i** T; Ar *yakhasan*; I *iakharsan*. **j** T; I *dinmairsan*; Ar *dinmäyirsän*. **k** T; Ar *növjavanımız*; I *novjanums*. **l** T; I *leimun*; Ar amends to *leysan*-. **m** I; Ar *süzmäginän*; T *suzmagian*. **n** T; Ar *qanımız*; I *qanums*. **o** T; Ar *yalvarmaqdan*; I *ialvarmakhtan*. **p** I; Ar *üzülübdür*; T *uzubdu*. **q** T; Ar *hayadan*; I *haiada*. **r** I *uzlarumzda* (laps. cal.); Ar *üzlärimizdän*; T *uzgharumzdan* (laps. cal.). **s** T; Ar *gülün*; I *guli*. **t** I; Ar *däkh*; T *dai*. **u** T; Ar *ämälimizdän*; I *amalumsdan*. **v** T *dai*; Ar *däni*; I *ondan*. **w** T; Ar *qilmamish*; I *qalmamish*. **x** T; I *tuzlarumzda*; Ar *düzlärimizdän*. **y** I; Ar *üstünä*; T *ustinda*. **z** T; Ar *qoneyim*; I *deneim*. **aa** T; Ar amends to *bashina*. **bb** T; Ar

saiat'nova diar^{cc}, qoi man^{dd} ianeim
t'ak'sana degmasun k'azlarum[i]dan.

Ese qap'ia kargi arut'inas nat'k'omi^{ee}.

What are you imagining, my gracious beloved?
 You suffer no complications from our words.
 From sighing 'Alas!' my liver, grown black, has perished.
 Bloody floods^a stream from our eyes.

I know^b you burn for love of me.
 You fix your coquettish glances on my breast.
 How would it be if you looked with sincerity?
 How quickly you have taken the scarlet (blood)^c from our substance.

Why will you not listen to our youth(ful pleas)?
 You squeeze my blood like (the juice of) a lemon.^d
 My soul is tortured by (this) supplication,
 The shame never leaving our face.

My beloved when she comes never passes^e by my side.
 The plucked bud will never grow into a rose.
 From our works no pearl^f shall come.
 Generosity is not made from our salts^g.

I want you to place your love in me.
 Like the moth, beloved, I return to the candle(-light)^h.
 Sayat'-Nova says, 'Set me on fire!
 As long as you are not touched by the flames!'
 (This very good *kâfiya* was recited by Arut'in)ⁱ

The poem is a traditional song of unrequited love, such as might be expected of any *ashugh* at any street-corner. The only striking image, and it may well not be original, is the complaint that the beloved has squeezed out her admirer's blood like the juice of a lemon, the idea of

döneyim. I recalls this verse as *bulbul tak'i qonch'a usta qoneim*. **cc** T; Ar *Sayat Nova deyär*; I *diar saiat'novam* (Georgian ergative?). **dd** I; Ar *män*; T *mana* (giving verse one syllable too many). **ee** This Georgian note is only in T.

a T.I. *selar*, read **seller*. Arasli amends needlessly to *sular* 'waters'. **b** Arasli amends this for SN untypically self-assured statement to *istäräm* 'I wish (that)'. **c** Reading *al* as Azeri *al*. Ar reads Az. *äl* 'hand'. **d** Ar probably unsatisfied with the image reads *leisan* 'shower, downpour'. **e** Reading, with Ar, Az. *ötmäjir*. Hasrat'yan 'seeing me, she never says a word' suggests that he reads the verb as from Tk. *ötmek* 'sing (of birds), chatter'. **f** Reading P *dur*, AP *durr*, Az. *dürr*, 'pearl'. Hasrat'yan's 'shall not arrive at its place' suggests influence from Tk. *durak* 'stopping-place', *durmak* 'stop, halt', or PT *dür* 'far'. **g** Tk. *toz*, Az. *duz*; Ar reads Az. *düzlär*- from *düz* 'straight, honest'. **h** Ar reads, meaninglessly, *bashına* 'to your head'. Ioane records the verse, impossibly, as 'Like the Nightingale let me settle on the Rose' (!). **i** This note, in Georgian, is only in the *Tetrak*.

which compels the poet's Azeri editor Arasli to an unnecessary emendation. Notable also is Ioane's version of the second verse of the fifth stanza, due to an in this case defective memory uncontrolled by sensitivity: at the thought of saying that the Nightingale, instead of serenading her from the garden fence, alighted *upon* the Rose, Sayat'-Nova would have thrown a fit.

A far more vital poem is that devoted to the Builder of Bridges. Strangely, given its significance for the relationship between his people and Sayat'-Nova's, Arasli does not include it in his selection, but it is to be found in both the *Tetrak* and Ioane's manuscript, and is included in Gaysaryan's smallish selection of Azeri songs, translated by Tarkovski.⁵

Rahmat' p'ir ustada k'orp'i t'ik'ana.
ot'an t'amalina bir tash duzeir.
el inch'un jan ch'ak'tum, umbrum^a t'uk'at'tum.
mazarum^b qaisini^c qardash duzeir.

Igit' o dur namagi^d var, nuni var.
qalkhar^e dizdan t'ok'ar, ch'okh ch'okh k'uni var.
har k'imun bir bat'man qurghushuni^f var.
varup^g zarap'khana p'arash duzeir.

Ch'arkhu p'alag beila ch'ogan ch'alup' dur.^h
ojagh zadalari nandan salup' dur.
hark'im k'ohna shala hasrat' qalup' dur
indi hujrasina qumash duzeir.

Mevlam nijat' iet'ur soliⁱ saghidan,^j
sakhlagin^k namagian baghidan.^l
onu ich'un ch'ak'ilmanam iaghidan,^m
sinama iaralar s(i)rdash duzeir.

Naⁿ bulbulsan k'i p'arvazun^o gor(u)nmaz.^p
mohubat^q k'es(i)lmish nazun^r gorunmaz.
banda saiatnova iazun gor(u)nmaz.
iet'an qalam almish naqash duzeir.

a T; I *ubrum*. **b** T; I *qabrum*. **c** I; T *qaisin*. **d** I; T *namak'i*. **e** T; I *qahar*. **f** I; T *qurqushuni*. **g** T; I *varili* (? for *varli*); this is in st. 3 in I. **h** This stanza is missing in I. **i** I; T *solu*. **j** T; I *sagh(i)ndan*. This is st. 2 in I. **k** T; I *qurt'ar b(i)zi*. **l** T; I *baghdan*. **m** T; I *iaghdan*. **n** T; I *neja*. **o** T; I *bulbulsan avazun*. **p** T; I *gorumaz*. **q** T; I *muhubat'*. **r** T; I *sazun*. **s** Reading *ot'an* as *Az ötän* (*ötmäk* 'pass by'); much less likely would be *o tän* (*tämälinä*) '(he may lay a stone) to his level (foundation)', though the poet would not object to the possible ambiguity.

⁵ T p. 43; I fol. 31A; Ga p. 209; H p. 179.

[Faint handwritten Armenian script, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.]

1. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie sehen, sondern wie sie sind.
 2. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie fühlen, sondern wie sie sind.
 3. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie denken, sondern wie sie sind.
 4. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie wollen, sondern wie sie sind.
 5. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie haben, sondern wie sie sind.
 6. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie verlieren, sondern wie sie sind.
 7. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie finden, sondern wie sie sind.
 8. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie erschaffen, sondern wie sie sind.
 9. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie zerstören, sondern wie sie sind.
 10. Die Natur der Dinge ist nicht, wie wir sie ändern, sondern wie sie sind.

The Azeri poem *Rahmat' p'ir ustada k'orpi t'ik'ana* 'Lord have mercy on the old master building a bridge' in the *Tetrak* (p. 43) and *Ioane* (fol. 31A) versions respectively.

The verb *Az düzmäk / T düzmek*, basically ‘straighten, level’ (T*az düz* ‘straight, even, level’) is open to various interpretations: ‘compose, arrange, prepare, bring together, mend, concoct, invent, counterfeit, forge’ (R), ‘put in a row, string together (as pearls), compose’ (‘nizat’, stavit’ v ryad, nabirat’, Ä), and requires a variety of English verbs. The form of the verb used as the repeated rhyme, *duzeir*, represents the Kazakh (NW Oghuz) pres. fut. aor. 3rd p.s. in -êr (M. Sh. Shiraliev, *Dialekti i govori Azerbaïdzhanskogo yazïka*, Baku, 1983, p. 112), though the context seems to call for an optative.

‘(Lord have) mercy on the old master building a bridge.
The passer-by may lay a stone to his foundation.
I have sacrificed my soul, worn out my life, for the [multiracial] nation [of Georgia?].
A brother may arrange a rock upon my grave.
He is a fine fellow, who has bread and salt [i.e. is hospitable].
He rises, (but) stumbles^t from the knees, (for) there are many, many, fetters^u.
Everyone has a load of lead [to bear].
Going^v to the money-changer’s booth, the footman^w may arrange [the appropriate exchange]
The Wheel of Fate strikes one like a polo-stick^x.
The offspring of a [settled] home are rocked by a cradle^y.

^t TI *t’ok’ar*. *Az tökmäk* ‘pour, scatter’ (Ä) does not fit. It is probably to be amended to **t’ok’sar*, after T *töksezimek*, *tökezmek* ‘stumble’ (Steuerwald); Professor Lewis adds a closer, popular, form *tökezmek*, and points out that the usual modern Azeri for ‘stumble’ is *büdrämäk* (‘spotikat’sya’, Äzizbäy). ^u Interpreting *k’uni* as a dialectal form (unlisted) of PT *kundah*, *künde* ‘log fastened to the leg of a man or beast as a fetter’ (R). Äzizbäy defines *Az kündä* only as ‘lump of clay or wood, block’, a basic meaning of P *kundah* ‘stump of a tree’ (S). H (*kapank’nir*) and Tarkovski (*okovi*) also translate it as ‘fetters’. To rhyme with *nân-i* (northern and Tajik pronunciation of P *nân*) and *qûrqushûni*, both with long *û*, the dialectal development would be *k’unde* > **k’unni* > *k’ûni*, with compensatory lengthening after simplification of the consonantal cluster. For the fetter image, cf. *k’ovle-* in Ioane’s annotation to the Georgian poem *Modi saqvarelo*, above, p. 402, n. k, p. 403, n. 5. The word that would have immediately presented itself to normal Azeri speakers would have been PT *kûni* ‘sodomite’ (SR), but whether SN intended this double meaning is uncertain. ^v T; I probably ‘the rich man (*varli*) (takes his) to...’ ^w APT *farrâsh* ‘one who lay mats, carpets, or cushions; a sweeper or servant of a mosque; (Persia) a guard or servant of low grade employed about a palace; these servants are also executioners’ (R). The meaning may be that the rich man manages to change his lead into gold. ^x PT *chaugân*, *chevgyân* (mystics) ‘the events and circumstances of life, a tossing man about like a ball’ (R). ^y *nan-*, *Az nânî* ‘cradle’, or possibly *Az nânä* ‘grandmother, mother’.

Everyone who regrets the loss of an old shawl [the miser]
May now in his closet lay down silk-cloth.

My Lord, for salvation it suffices [to tell] left from right [*i.e.* bad from good],

[This] preserving [us]^z from the binding-spell of [malicious] letters.^{aa}

Therefore shall I not retreat before the enemy.

The wounds to my breast may an intimate-friend allay.^{bb}

What sort of nightingale are you, who are never seen to fly?^{cc}

When love is denied, your charms^{dd} are never seen.

Sayat'-Nova, you slave, one sees nothing written by you.

The (first)-comer to pick up a pen may draw a picture.'

This poem is followed by a note in Georgian in the *Tetrak* reading *qap'ia Arut'inas nat'k'omi martis it' k'(roni)k(on)s UMZ* 'This *qâfiya* was recited by Arut'in on 19th March of the chronicon [A.D. 1758]'. A note by Ioane reads *Ese qap'ia t'ejnis khmazed aris saiat'novas nat'k'omi* 'This is a *qâfiya* in the *tejnîs* mode recited by Sayat'-Nova'.

This poem on the Master Bridge-Builder belongs to no one particular genre, but to several. It is both of general and autobiographical interest, and Ioane was near to the truth in describing it, unlike the writer in the *Tetrak*, who may be the poet himself or one writing at his dictation, who calls it simply a *qâfiya* or rhyme, as also a *tejnîs* or 'allegory'. Much in the poem is by way also of an *öyüdlämä* (T *öğütleme*), a word often used (as *ogut'lama*) in the annotations, literally 'advice', *i.e.* a didactic piece of wisdom literature, a genre of which Sayat'-Nova, the future priest and monk, was especially fond. Much in the poem is of a mystical nature, recalling the Muslim Sûffism, familiar to the West mainly from the works of Jalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî and, somewhat less religiously, Omar Khayyâm. Sayat'-Nova's Wheel of Fate that strikes one like a polo-stick is an image that is found in the latter's Rubai'yât:

^z T; I 'save us'. ^{aa} *namagian*; four syllables are required for the verse, which probably explains this as a wrong form of P *nâmagân*, pl. of *nâma*^h 'letter, writing', the reference here being most likely to poison-pen letters. The form is close to APT *nammâs*, *nammâm*, *nammâl* 'slanderer', but no emendation of the text is called for. ^{bb} Reading *sinama iaralar s(i)rdash duzeir* as if *Az sinâmâki yaralarî sirdash düzêr*; closer would be *Az sinâmâ yaralar sirdash düzêr*, but this gives the improbable meaning 'May an intimate friend heap wounds on my breast'. ^{cc} T; I 'whose voice is never seen' (!). ^{dd} T; I 'your saz'.

اي رفته بچوگان قضا همچو گو
*Ai raftah ba.chaugân-i qaza hamchû gû*⁶

‘O one going before the polo-stick of Fate as it were a ball.’

The many encumbrances that impede a man’s progress like a ball and chain find a direct echo in Omar’s quatrains:

بر رهگذارم هزار جا دام نهی
*Bar rahguzâram hazâr jâ dâm nahî*⁷

‘In a thousand places along the way I take thou placest snares.’

It may seem at times that Sayat^ˆ-Nova knew the verses of Omar directly, and indeed, given their celebrity in the Near East and later in Europe, he may well have done. But, like the *charkh-i falak*, ‘the Wheel of Fate’ to which the Persian poet refers half a dozen times or more, these ideas are common to many Muslim authors, though admittedly more to those of Persia, whose influence upon their coreligionaries of Azerbaidjan and the Caucasus, where Sayat^ˆ-Nova encountered them, was all-pervasive.

The amount of lead that Sayat^ˆ-Nova gives as the lot of each man is, however, measured by the Turkish/Azeri *batmân*, *bât mân*, the ‘mina of trade’ that Redhouse defines as varying between two and eight oqas, i.e. from 5 1/2 to 22 lbs, but which others define as being usually 6 oqas, i.e. six times 1283 grams, i.e. 7698 grams, or 17 pounds (Steuerwald).⁸ More than a stone of lead is a lot for a man to carry around, and the thought must be an extension of the *Klotz am Bein* image of the preceding verse. The following verse, however, is not easy to interpret. Who is the money-changer, and who is the sweeper or servant who orders, arranges, settles the exchange? Ioane in his variant interprets the verse as meaning that the *varlî* or rich man gets his servant to change the lead into cash, presumably at a profit, which might remind the Christian of the parable of the talents, but which leads naturally to the anti-hereditary, anti-mercantile sentiments of the following stanza. Or have the

⁶ E.H. Whinfield, *The quatrains of Omar Khayyâm*, London, 1883, no. 401, p. 269; ‘The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes, / But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes’, E. Fitzgerald, st. L.

⁷ Whinfield, no. 432, p. 291.

⁸ The *oqqa/okka* is defined by Redhouse as the equivalent of 2.83 lbs or 2.20 lbs; it consists of 400 dirhems, and despite the imprecise nature of the *oqqa*, the Turks use this fact as the basis of an adage, *okka dört yüz dirhem*, meaning ‘it’s no use beating about the bush’ (‘daran gibt es nichts zu deuteln und zu drehen’, Steuerwald); given the wellknown Turkish sense of humour, one suspects that this is often said with a wry grimace.

verses a deeper, mystical, intent, meaning that we must all eventually bring our leaden selves to the Assessor of Souls, when the Sweeper, Death, may, if we are found wanting, sweep us away into oblivion? This would recall another passage by Omar Khayyâm concerning the vulnerability of Man:

*Sargashtah chû bâd dam-ba-dam gard-i jihân
tâ khâk-i man za jât bar dashtah and*

‘Blowing like the winds from one moment to another round the world
Until they have blown my dust all away.’

And another, in which the elements composing the body, and the silken cocoon in which it lives, disintegrate in death:

چون شاهد روح خانه پرداز شود
هر جنس باصل خویشتن باز شود
این ساز وجود چار ابریشم طبع
از زخمه روزگار بی ساز شود

*Chûn shâhid-i rûh khâna pardâz shûd
Har jins b.aşl-i kh^weshtan bâz shûd
În sâz-i wujûd-i châr abrîsham-i tab^c
Az zakhm-i rûzgâr bî sâz shûd.⁹*

‘When the beloved soul quits its mansion
Every kind reverts to its elements.
The individual fourfold silken form of (man’s) nature
Is dissolved by the wounds (inflicted by) the world.’

In Whinfield’s translation, which though not as magical as Fitzgerald’s, is more literal, but still not lacking in grace, this reads

When the fair soul this mansion doth vacate,
Each element assumes its primal state,
And all the silken furniture of life
Is then dismantled by the blows of fate.

It is between these two cultures, Islam and Christendom, that Sayat^c-Nova himself builds a bridge. The idea was not novel in Georgia. It must, indeed, have been the ideal of the Muslim Mukhranian Bagratids who ruled Tiflis during Sayat^c-Nova’s childhood, but, as we have seen, played an important rôle in the Georgian Church by appointing cadet members of their line to the catholicate and archbishoprics,

⁹ Whinfield, no. 223, p. 151; no. 225, pp. 152-3.

and marching to war with Muslim battle-cries and Christian holy books and images: pontifex, therefore, is a title they would have deserved. It was, however, a royal idea, resisted by the Christian populace of Tiflis to the extent of demolishing any attempts to construct a mosque in the city. The fact that the Georgian ruler of Tiflis was a Muslim could not have failed to impress a young Armenian, and — one hopes it is not too cynical so to suggest — one with thoughts of a musical career at court in whom theological considerations were not uppermost may have considered following the eclectic example of the Mukhranian Bagratids.¹⁰ When after twenty years of dynastic confusion, when Russia, Persia and Turkey strove for hegemony in Georgia, the Kakhian Bagratids succeeded as kings of Georgia, T^eimurazi II in Tiflis and his son Irakli at T^elav, in 1744, the Georgian courts were again Christian; but although certain Muslim groupings caused them trouble, as wise rulers of a heterogeneous land they would have striven to minimise religious conflict, and would have encouraged any ecumenism on the part of their minstrel. In 1744 Sayat⁻Nova was about 32 years of age, on his own evidence a fully-fledged *ashugh*, singing in Azeri, and attuned from childhood to Islamic themes; it is probable that his own *pîr ustâd* was an Azeri Muslim. But it is clear he did not abandon his native Armenian faith. We know from his 1753 Armenian ode, *Dun ên gēlkhen imastun is*, that should the grave that he anticipates be, like that of Themistocles, ‘in foreign earth “neath a foreign stone”’,¹¹ he prays that it be not ‘Hindu, or Abyssinian [strangely, since the Abyssinian Coptic Church is in full communion with the Armenian Orthodox], or Arab’,¹² but Armenian;

¹⁰ See above, Chapter Eight, p. 357, Chapter Nine, p. 389. One may compare the court of the Mukhranian T^eimurazi I with that of his contemporary, the king of Imeretⁱ, Alexander III, whom Castelli, who drew the portraits of both, describes as ‘worthy of being loved by true Christians for the fidelity paid to Christ our blessed Lord and his holy faith, despising and combatting in his defence the works of Turks, Saracens, and Persians, enemies of Christ’. He notes that ‘Alexander is otherwise called a Bagratian, descending from the race of David, blood relation of Christ Our Saviour, benefactor of our missionary (Theatine) fathers in the kingdom of Georgia, in the year A.D. 1649’. Among other numerous inscriptions that surround the portrait, Castelli attributes romanizing tendencies to Alexander: ‘The king of Georgia told me, “It is my ill fortune to be so far from the Vicar of Christ, since I should throw in my lot with him and not with the Greeks, since I well know the difference between these two nations”’ (*Relazione*, ed. B. Giorgadze, T^bilisi, 1976, pl. 8; repr. by Allen facing p. 348, where Allen remarks that in the matter of morality Alexander was in no way superior to T^eimurazi, though why he should be is unclear).

¹¹ ὁθνεῖην ὑπέδω χθόνα καὶ λίθον, Diodorus, *Greek Anthology*, vii. 74.

¹² I, fol. 64; H, p. 20.

'There is no denying it, I am Armenian', he declares elsewhere.¹³ The thought that there might not be such a thing as Christianity would have been anathema to him, so that he is unlikely, *mutatis mutandis*, to go as far as Omar, who as a lost resort, if Islam did not exist, would contemplate turning Christian:

ور سبحة سجّاده و شیعہ نبود
 14 ناقوس و کایسیا و زَنّار اینک

War subha wa sajjâda wa shaikhî nabûd
Nâqûs wa kalîsyâ wa zunnâr inak.

'And if (in Paradise) there were no beads, or prayer-mat, or sheikh,
 Lo, I would have bells and a church and a monkish girdle.'

'For forms and creeds let graceless zealots fight', is the quotation from Pope that Whinfield chooses to illustrate this quatrain, and there can be little doubt that in the eyes of the strict Orthodox Christians Sayat'-Nova flirted enough with 'infidel' ideas to give support to the theory that Church authorities, in the person of the Catholicos Anton, contributed to his dismissal from the Georgian court in 1759 and his exile to the shores of the Caspian as a parish priest. Nevertheless, in this Azeri poem Sayat'-Nova hopes that, whatever passer-by contribute to that for which he has already laid the foundation, it will be a brother, no doubt a fellow Armenian Christian, who will erect his gravestone. He represents himself as one who has suffered much for his cause. He had no privileges of birth, was not one from a settled home, a *fils à papa* rocked in a cradle. He has not been parsimonious with an eye to making a fortune, such as he who would not throw away an old shawl, and now has coffers full of silks. The enemy before whom, with the help of his Lord, he will not retreat, may be Satan, and the friend who may, according to one interpretation, allay the wounds to his breast may be Jesus. But the experience might be much less mystical. The intimate friend may be the beloved, who has otherwise no specific mention, and according to the other interpretation, may increase the wounds his breast already has to endure, as he complains in other poems: 'You have wounded my heart'.¹⁵ Or the friend may be one that has turned into a enemy: 'You

¹³ *Saiat'nova dinisi sai; ink'ar etmas: ermani dur*, in *Dada olan sozi belu*, T p. 62, H p. 187; see above, p. 357-8, n. 132.

¹⁴ Whinfield, no. 293, p. 197.

¹⁵ *Sirtës yarali shinetz'ir*, in *Dastamazët*, st. 3 v. 2, 117, H 34.

have made enemies of my friends'.¹⁶ He trusts that God will save him, not from evil in general, but from 'letters' in particular, which in 1758 could well be from the calumniators he fears in other poems, Armenian and Georgian, not only in accord with troubadour tradition, but real enemies whose influence led to his dismissal one year later. His career is clearly already in steep decline: he is a nightingale who is no longer seen to fly, or, as his son remembers it, whose voice is no longer heard. By whom is his love 'cut off, denied', so that he can no longer exert his charm, or, as Ioane has it, more prosaically, play his saz? It may be a beloved. But the Georgian poems of supplication, 'Believe me!', 'Do me justice', and the Armenian ode 'You are exceeding wise' which asks the addressee not to open his mind to a fool,¹⁷ suggests rather the King himself, Irakli II, about to withdraw his patronage. The poet laments that no-one sees his writings. Certainly, his works had to wait for nearly a century before being printed, in Akhverdyan's edition of 1852, and since the first printing press in Georgia was imported at the beginning of the 18th century into Georgia from Wallachia by Vakahtangi VI, and the Georgian Bible was not printed until 1742, in Moscow, there was no great chance of Sayat'-Nova's poems being printed in Georgia. Perhaps he had his eye across the borders of Georgia on Armenia, where printing started earlier. But his lament probably reflects an anxiety that his work will not survive even in manuscript, and it is likely that it was this fear that led him to commission the *Tetrak* some six years after the end of his active career, in 1765/6. Though he is suggesting in 1758 that he has ceased to sing, we know, given the profusion of songs dated in that and the following year, that that is not the case. They may, however, as we have described them above in Chapter Five, mostly be regarded as swan-songs, and this Azeri poem, full of feelings of despair and thwarted idealism, is one such. The final verse reflects the fear of the minstrel that the patronage he has enjoyed will pass to another. The Anglo-Saxon 8th or 9th-century *scop* Deor showed indulgence towards his successor, *leodcræftig monn* 'a man skilled in song', and accepted his lot philosophically: 'That passed over, so can this'.¹⁸ Five years earlier, in 1753, Sayat'-Nova had displayed a similar self-deprecating modesty:

¹⁶ *Dostirēs dushman shinetz'ir*, in *Me khosk unim*, st. 3 v. 1, T 121, I 67A, H 45.

¹⁷ *Damijere*, I 14A, B 9; *Samart'ali miqav*, I 17, B 17; *Dun ên gēlkhen imastun is*, st. 1 v. 1, I 64, H 20.

¹⁸ *þæs ofereode, pisses swa mæg*, *The Song of Deor*, in *The Exeter Book*, ed. W.S. Mackie, part II, (1934) 1958, p. 85; see above, p. 124 n. 23.

‘Whether I be, or whether I be not, the court will not want for music.
If I be wanting, wanting to you, this world will not lack so much as a hair’.¹⁹

Now he suggests that the first comer to pick up a pen may take his place. No-one, he is saying, appreciates, as a century or so later Whistler will put it to Ruskin, ‘a lifetime of experience’. The picture drawn by the newcomer (*yetän* ὁ ἐντυχών) is not likely to be any good; but for the present generation at court, *yetär*: it is good enough.

‘Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way to life’, say the Christians, and the Muslim bridge across Hell, the *Şirât*, of which Sayat^ç-Nova would not have been unaware, Muḥammad described as thinner than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. In his cause as bridge-builder, Sayat^ç-Nova has worked himself to death. For the sake of the nation, he says. What nation? If the Armenian nation, or the Georgian, why is the poem in Azeri? It would seem his horizons are broader, and that he is thinking in terms such as a Caucasian unity, in which Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri might live together in harmony, under the beneficent rule of a wise leader like Irakli II, and Azeri, as the common language, was the best vehicle for the message. Certainly Sayat^ç-Nova, by virtue of his compositions in the three main languages of the Caucasus, is an ideal symbol for a Transcaucasian Republic such as that which has such a short-lived existence in 1920, and which broke up because Armenians, Georgians, and Azeris found it difficult to co-exist as one nation. Sayat^ç-Nova, culturally at home with Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri, singing like a nightingale in all their tongues and on all their themes, Christian and Muslim, showed what could, once again perhaps, be a reality. One must try to reconstruct the bridge he built by his songs. Strait and narrow it may be, calling for the skills of a tight-rope walker who may, like the unfortunate minstrel himself, fall in the attempt, but there can be no other way to peace in that afflicted part of the world.

¹⁹ *T’eguz ėlim, t’eguz ch’ėlim, mejlisnerun saz ch’i paksi. / T’e ku paksim, k’iz ku paksim, ashkharis me maz ch’i paksi*, in *Dun ėn gėlkhen imastun is*, st. 5 vv. 2-3, I 64, H 20.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE RUSSIAN POEMS

Included in Ioane's manuscript written in St. Petersburg are six poems in Russian that seem to have been neglected by all commentators: they are certainly completely ignored by Hasrat'yan. Ioane himself thought them important, for at the end of one of them he thanks God, in Georgian, that the poem, and presumably the others, were discovered by him among the Russians at the expense of much sweat.¹ Ioane signs himself there in the Russian manner as *Ivan Seidov*, but he was clearly far from assimilated. His Russian script is crude, nowhere approaching the standard of his (often too) fluent Georgian hand. The grammar is poor, and though this may be the fault of Sayat'-Nova himself, it is also possible that Ioane's own faulty Russian has affected his memory of what his father actually composed, and/or what he managed to take down from his apparent Russian informants. There is evidence throughout his manuscript that even when it was a matter of Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri verse, many subtleties of grammar, rhyme and metre escaped him, and his memory cannot always be trusted. Indeed, in an annotation to one of the Russian poems he refers to his difficulties: 'I did not know a good text: the reading(s) are obscure'.² Whatever faults Ioane may have introduced, however, the style of the texts themselves indicates that many are to be attributed to Sayat'-Nova himself, many of the errors which affect the rhyme and the metre being impossible for anyone with a good command of Russian. Apart from serious errors in the mobile stress accent which wreaks havoc with the would-be

¹ *madloba ghmert's russobashi metz' amis meti tsura vishove umtz'iresi ivan seidov magakhsenebs* 'Thanks to God, within the Russian-community (*russoba*), I also (? like SN) sweated greatly for this (and) found (it); the humble Ivan Seidov thanks thee', fol. 54.

² *kai tsera ar vitz'odi tsasakidkhia bneli / qovelt'vis t'k'ueni m(o)na gakhliavar ch'emgan nu aigheb kheli*, fol. 55, 'A good writing I did not know — the reading is obscure. / Always I am your (*pl.*) slave — do not withdraw your hand [i.e. protection] from me'. *kheli* rhymes with *bneli*, but since the lines do not even approximately scan, this is fortuitous, and Ioane is not vying in the poetic art with his father; nor is the annotation, as often, a description of the contents of the poem, and it must be an address to the manuscript's sponsor, T'eimurazi Batonishvili.

rhymes,³ no distinction is made between the hard and soft signs indicating unpalatalised and palatalised consonants, or between front and middle *i/i* (и/ы). Whether the poet appreciated these phonetic distinctions is a matter for conjecture: both Armenian and Georgian are free of these features, and the Azeri *i* (in any case not usually distinguished in the Armenian and Georgian scripts of the manuscripts except by occasional omission between consonants)⁴ differs from Russian *i*; it may not be irrelevant that many of the modern speakers of Armenian and Georgian in the former Soviet Union ignore it when speaking Russian.⁵ On the other hand, professional singers usually have a good ear for phonetic variations between one language and another such as many a language student must find impressive, and one would think that a multilingual minstrel like Sayat'-Nova, whose world was the world of sound, would have had as good an ear as English singers of Fauré, Schubert, and Verdi. The poet would not have wanted for opportunities to hear Russian spoken. He was about ten years old when, in 1722, Peter the Great and his Cossacks captured Derbend, and the Russians drew ever nearer, with political and trade missions, until, by 1912, Baedeker could estimate the population of Tiflis as composed of 22% Russians (mainly officials and the military), 40.9% Armenians, and only 17.7% Georgians.

Russians had first appeared in any numbers in the Caucasus in 914 with their short-lived occupation of the Albanian capital Partav/Barda'a.⁶ Many centuries were to pass after their departure until the Russian tsars revived their interest in wresting control of the Caspian from the hands of the Persians for reasons of trade and imperial prestige. As the only

³ It is not without interest to note with respect to mistakes in rhyme and rhythm in Russian poems by non-Russians that a much more learned poet than Sayat'-Nova, viz. Rainer Maria Rilke found himself here at sea: in his *Pervaya Pesnya* (First Song), of 29th November 1900, he attempts to rhyme *sidit* 'she sits' with *slishit* 'she hears' (Konstantin Asadowski (ed.), *Rilke und Russland Briefe Erinnerungen Gedichte*, Insel Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p. 488; there is at least one orthographical or grammatical mistake in each of the seven poems there reproduced, pp. 488-496).

⁴ SN may have ignored the difference in his Azeri verse in rhyming *i* with *i*; see above, Chapter Five, p.190.

⁵ Like many Englishmen: when the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, visited Russia in the '60's, Khrushchev told him that he spoke Russian like Mikoyan, no doubt principally due to non-palatalised consonants; conversely, in the sort of Armenian spoken by admirers of Russia, called by its critics *hrushakayin* or "tea-shop" Armenian, the palatalised consonants of loanwords like *d'irektor* are strongly palatalised.

⁶ Movsēs Daskhurantz'i, *The history of the Caucasian Albanians*, III. 21, tr. C.J.F. Dowsett, OUP: London, 1961, pp. 223-4.

non-Muslim independent nation in the area, Georgia was to play an important rôle in Russian expansion. From the 16th century the Georgian rulers and nobles, caught up in the power struggles between Persia, Turkey, and Russia, had become involved with a whole series of greater and lesser Russian autocrats, Ivan the Terrible, Boris Godunov, Fyodor Ivanovich (who assumed, as Allen says, 'somewhat prematurely',⁷ but nevertheless prophetically, the title of 'Lord of the Iberian land, of the Tsars of Georgia'), Michael Romanov, Peter the Great, Catherine II, and the Emperor Paul. Varying allegiances set father against son, brother against brother, a particularly ignominious low point in Georgian history being the murder by the pro-Persian Constantine of his pro-Russian father Alexander of Kakhet'i and his elder brother in 1604: Russia's own Time of Troubles often seems pale in comparison with Georgia's. T'eimurazi I, who has been mentioned as a notable predecessor of Sayat'-Nova in familiarising his countrymen with the delights of Persian literature, being expelled from Tiflis by the Shâh, tried vainly to restore his fortunes by swearing allegiance as King of Kakhet'i, though only recently confirmed as such by Shâh Abbâs, to Michael Romanov in 1639, exchanging missions, the object of that of 1641 being to arrange the marriage of his grandson to the Tsar's sister (though the Russian envoy drowned in the Caspian and nothing came of the proposal). Sayat'-Nova's time at the court in T'elavi coincided with close relations of his royal patron Irakli II with the Russians. One of the poet's supposed enemies, the Catholicos Anton, spent years at St. Petersburg, and when recalled by Irakli to reorganise the ancient theological colleges at Tiflis and T'elavi, introduced the ideas of the progressive German educationist Bacmeister. One year after the minstrel's dismissal, in 1760, Irakli's father, T'eimurazi II of K'art'li, journeyed from Tiflis to St. Petersburg to sue for aid against the Lezghians. Despite these chronological coincidences, there is no reason to suspect that Sayat'-Nova's exile was attributable to any disaffection with the pro-Russian policies of his patrons or any sympathy for the Persian cause. He admired Persia for cultural reasons, not political. He was indeed finally to be a tragic

⁷ W.E.D. Allen, *A history of the Georgian people*, London, 1932, p. 164; chapters XIV-XVIII, pp. 161-218, of this vividly written work, based mainly on Georgian sources in M.-F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 2ième partie, Histoire Moderne, 1ière livraison, 1836, 2ième livraison, 1837, and John F. Baddeley, *The Russian conquest of the Caucasus*, London, 1908, give a detailed account of Russo-Georgian relations from the 16th to 19th centuries, to which the above outline is indebted.

victim of these rivalries. In 1795, when Irakli II was allied to Catherine the Great, the approach of Agha Mahmad Khan led the old monk, in one traditional account,⁸ to leave Haghpāt and travel to the Cossack fort of Mozdok to place his children under the protection of the Russians, to be martyred in Tiflis on his return. His Russian poems also suggest that his sympathies lay, like those of his patrons, with their powerful Christian neighbour to the North. Any cultural versus political ambiguity displayed towards Persia would not, however, apply to Russia, which occupied no comparable cultural niveau. There is one further link of Sayat'-Nova with Russo-Georgian relations that, were it not posthumous, he may have viewed with mixed feelings: it was on the death of his former owner, Giorgi XIII, the *qaen* whose *qma* he so reluctantly had been and who was the last representative of an independent Georgian monarchy, in 1801, that Tsar Paul incorporated Georgia into the Russian Empire. It is one thing to ask the Bear to give you a hand: it is quite another to get one's own hand back again.

The Georgians, of course (as anyone who knows them must interject), had no feelings of inferiority towards the Russians. In recent times Soviet agitprops might have persuaded some to look upon the Russian as a *starshii brat* or Big Brother, but for others, though they are not recorded as going so far as the Armenians as to call him an 'onion' (*sokh*), he was often dismissed as 'Ivan Ivanishvili', and in any case the Russians and all the other Soviet nationalities were led for decades by one of their own people, Jugashvili alias Stalin. In his Russian poems Sayat'-Nova reflects these feelings of superiority. 'Your father was a slave', he says; 'mine were Bagratians'. Whose father is unclear, but words in Russian are usually addressed to Russians. The reference is most likely to the two centuries, from the 13th to the 15th, that Russia was under the Tatar yoke. That the Georgians were also forced into arrangements with the Mongols during that period, one of their historians even lauding 'the excellent laws established by Chingiz Khan'⁹ could well slip through the selective memory that forms a part of poetic liberty. It is by the exercise of a like liberty that Sayat'-Nova, he who in Georgian poems had declared that he was a peasant who had no aspirations to be a prince, claims to descend from the Bagratunis (for he as an Armenian is well aware of the origin of the Bagratians of Georgia),

⁸ See above, Chapter One, p. 34-37.

⁹ Allen, p. 112, quoting Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, I, p. 486.

which is as though an English poet were to claim to have Plantagenets as his ancestors. But why not? Boasting was a national sport among the Russians, as descriptions of their feasts at the court of Vladimir the Great in their *bilini* show. The Bagratuni/Bagratian family had played a major rôle in Georgia since the 9th century.¹⁰ In Sayat'-Nova's time it was no longer true that the house of Bagrationi held sway 'from Nikopsia [in Abkhasia on the Black Sea] to Derbend [on the Caspian]',¹¹ but it had retained its power in Kakhet'i, and the poet's patron Irakli II, a member of this royal house, striving to reestablish its former glory, would have appreciated his minstrel's loyal pride, though not, except in the widest sense, accepting him as one of the family. In lauding the Georgian royal house, Sayat'-Nova was but echoing the attitude of the Russian autocrats themselves; for, as Allen remarks with respect to the proposed alliance of a Georgian prince with the Tsar's sister, 'to the parvenu houses of Godunov and Romanov an alliance with the Bagratids, of the most ancient lineage in Christendom and collaterally descended from the Comneni, was not without attraction'.¹² Since one could add 'from the Palaiologi also',¹³ the attraction would have been such that any misgivings would have come from the Georgian side, where the disastrous, state-threatening marriage of their revered Bagratid queen T'amara in 1185 to the ambitious George Bogolyubskoi, son of the Great Prince Andrew of Suzdal, who tried to usurp the Georgian throne, would not have been forgotten.¹⁴

What induced Sayat'-Nova, master minstrel at the Georgian court, singing like a nightingale in the three main languages of the Caucasus, to try his hand at Russian verse, and actually to compose more in that language than in his revered Persian? Given the political climate at the time, it is possible that Irakli himself, seeking protection from this powerful neighbours at St. Petersburg, asked him to produce intelligible samples of Georgian culture with which to impress them; or perhaps a visiting Russian diplomat, hearing the minstrel perform at court, had enquired about the content of his songs. For one imagines it must have been during his active poetic career that he composed them: he would

¹⁰ Allen, pp. 81-84, etc.

¹¹ Allen, p. 107, 131.

¹² Allen, p. 172, n. 1.

¹³ A short summary of these Byzantine-Georgian marriages is given by Allen, p. 122, n. 2.

¹⁴ Allen, pp. 104-6.

later, in exile at Anzal, doubtless come into contact with Russian merchants and sailors for whom he could perhaps have written the songs, but that would hardly be expected of the Armenian Orthodox parish priest he had by then become. Ioane does not say which branch of *Russoba*, which particular Russian community possessed the songs he was able to salvage, nor does any internal textual evidence tell anything, apart from the fact that it could not have been Cossack, since the poems are not in Ukrainian, but Russian. It is possible that it was the melodiousness of the Russian language itself, crying out for a poet to do it justice, that prompted a multilingual experimenter such as Sayat'-Nova to test its poetical potential. Whether he wrote the poems at the height of his fame in 1750, or after his exile from Georgia in 1759, it would be a half to three quarters of a century before a native Russian arose, later to be called the Father of Russian Literature, to exploit the musicality of the king of Slavonic languages — and it may or may not be relevant that he had oriental blood in his veins. On purely chronological grounds, therefore, this circumstance makes Sayat'-Nova a precursor in modern Russian literature. It is doubtful, however, that his odes will be accepted into the canon, or indeed deserve to be: their faults must be beyond any emendation. Nevertheless, if Shakespeare had taken to writing sonnets in Bohemian, one would be unwise not to take note of them: faulty grammar or no, there would be poetry in them, and so it is with Sayat'-Nova's Russian odes. It cannot be said, for all that, that they do anything to enhance Sayat'-Nova's reputation — though there is no need for them so to do — and they do not do the same justice to Russian as his eventual Russian translators did to the poems in his own languages. None of these admirers of Sayat'-Nova — Bryusov, Shervinski, Zvyaginskaya — makes any reference to these Russian poems, perhaps because they *are* admirers, reluctant to advertise defective work in their own language which would reflect badly on him.¹⁵ The poet would doubtless have regretted his errors; but we know, particularly from his Georgian poems, that he was a proud man, displaying defiance when challenged: where, he might have asked in 1750, can you show me anything better?

¹⁵ Perhaps some were unaware of their existence, Ioane's manuscript being securely guarded in the *Institut Narodov Azii* in St. Petersburg; but it is only there that manuscript versions of the Georgian poems are to be found, and Tarkovski, Gaysaryan, etc. must surely have consulted it for their versions.

The first two pieces, on fol. 53r, are grammatically and metrically very defective, and of no literary value. They are included here merely for the sake of completeness. It will serve no useful purpose to attempt to amend the text, whether the faults lie with Sayat'-Nova himself, or Ioane. The first reads as follows:

вамъ доложу историа ушлишити господа
 скажица прежде неб(ы)ль зачильки нови мода
 па(че)чаини случидасъ гневаила милаи мене
 хочить тржгад [= прижигать] страшниимъ огномъ приготовил вси
 города
 пр(и)казаль ко мне ни ходи перестани стари чирть [= чорт]
 ти безделнигъ и без денигъ риши твои борода
 бедни ивана тебу штудъ [?студись] надо выстоить
 бесъ щуахъ [?страха] пусти(сь) ибо нако(р)млати ничай вгорода.
 'I shall tell you a story. Listen, gentlemen.
 Something never before known will be said, twitterings in a new mode.
 Unexpectedly it happened. My sweetheart was angry with me.
 She wants to set (me) alight with a terrible fire. She has prepared all towns.
 She commanded me, "Do not go! Stay, you old devil!
 You are a layabout and penniless. Get your beard cut!"
 Poor Ivan, cool down! You must get better!^a
 Push on without fear, for no-one will feed you in (these) cities!'

Ioane appends a note in Georgian, 'This is a *shakhat'ai* (*ese shakhat'ai aris*), which gives a new (and utterly false) dimension to this literary genre (see above, pp. 269-272, 336-7, 355-362).

The second Russian poem on fol. 53r reads:

безъ закони судъ приступлинъ [преступлений]
 над мна отъ тебе думить
 високому дамъ прозбу
 мож(еть) стаца онъ примит.
 ох какъ мне битъ усерднымъ как буду
 с ним помирить ни знаю
 с чемъ винавать бяют руку ногу ломить
 помилути господа какъ буду с нимъ
 уважать зладеи свои полетикимъ
 мене за моримъ утонить

^a The verb *vistoyat'sya*, if this is meant, is mainly used in this sense for horses ('(von Pferden) sich verschnauben, erholen', Pawlowski, 'sich wieder erholen (Pferd)', Blatter/Orschel).

(As a) criminal (before) an illegal court [?]
 It seems (a charge was brought) against me by you.
 I shall enter a plea with the Most High.
 Perhaps he will entertain it.
 Oh how can I be energetic (in my cause)?
 How I shall be reconciled with him, I do not know.
 Of what am I guilty? They cut off my hand, break my leg.
 Have mercy, gentlemen. How shall I honour him?
 Miscreants by their politics drown me in (*lit.* beyond) the sea.

In his note in Georgian at the end of the poem Ioane calls it an *esbart'lama*, probably from Az. *äzbärlätmäk*, which Äzizbäy defines as 'to cause to learn by heart', but which in the present context retains the meaning of its etymon APT *iştibâr*, *issibâr* 'exercising endurance' (Red-house).

This poem, with its irregular metre and poor, when not, by reason of wrong stress, impossible rhymes, has no literary value. But the mention of a downfall due to politics, an idea, though suggested, not so plainly expressed in his poems in other languages, is of biographical interest. To take *za morem* in its literal Russian meaning, Sayat'-Nova was never exiled 'beyond the sea'. But he came close to it in 1759, when he was exiled from the Georgian court to the shores of the Caspian, at Anzal (where he would meet many Russian merchants and seamen), though whether that entitles one so to date and place his Russian poems can be only a matter for conjecture.

The third, on fol. 53A, reads as follows:

Всегда через тебе я сумасечи [сумашедший].
 Ни (не) знаю какъ будю [буду] с тобой гулять [гулять].
 Пр(и)казали [? запретили] мене (мне) в тайни речи.
 Растрадаюсь. Себе [себя] ни [не] могу знать [знать].
 Я твои [твой] слуга. Даи [дай] мне видъ.
 Для тебе [тебя] мне всеик [всякъ] примить [?примыть].
 С тобои [тобой] спорить [спорить] нихто [никто] ни [не] можить [можетъ].
 Из велики(и) полень и очинь [очень] багать [богать].
 Буд(ь) мне мидосливъ [милостивъ] для бога ради.
 Прими рука залатои [золотой] фечати [печати!].
 Подом [пойдёмъ] [с] мидои [милой] гуладъ [гулять] для летнимъ
 сади [в летнемъ саду].
 Получусъ [получу] я части вес[ь] моа [?мною, собою] буду радъ.

Похраним[ъ]ся мести [вместе] в(ъ) зелен(е)мъ дубу.
 Сравнимся [сравним] весепои голубу [?веселую голубизну].
 Назначей [назначи] мене [меня] ваши службу [?в твою службу].
 При вас слуга я буду брадъ [братъ].

Зачиль [зачемъ] милои мои [милый мой] виругать [выругать]
 мене [меня].

С чем я винавать [виновать] дай знать [знать] мене [мне].
 Услишили [услышали] хочишь [хочешь] обежа [обижать] мене
 [меня].

Дивуть [дивяться] тужуть [тужать] для мене [меня] вес[ъ] горадъ
 [городъ].

Because of you I am forever mad.
 I do not know how I shall walk with you.
 Secretly they have ordered (?forbidden) me to speak.
 I suffer. I can no longer know myself.

I am your servant. Give me a sight (of you).
 Because of you everyone (else) is washed out
 [or reading predmet, is merely an object].
 No-one can dispute with you,
 (You) being full of great (majesty) and very rich.

Be merciful to me for the love of God.
 Take, O hand, (this) golden seal.
 Let us go (with) my dear, through the summer garden.
 If I receive (but) a part I am in myself content.

Let us shelter together in (under) the green oak tree.
 Let us compare (together) the happy blue (sky).
 Appoint me to your service.
 (As) a servant with you I shall be a brother.

Why, my dear one, scold me?
 In what am I guilty, let me know.
 One has heard, you wish to insult me.
 The whole town is perplexed, and grieves for me.

The faults in orthography are many, but it is clear that all the defects of this would-be Russian ode are not to be laid at the door of the poet's son. The rhymes leave much to be desired. To 'rhyme' *sumasechi* (*sumashedshiĭ*) with *rechi* is not a good start, and the proper stress accent forbids the rhyming of *mozhet* with *vid*, *brat* with *gorod*, even if one accepts the devoicing of the final consonants. The distinction between palatalised and unpalatalised consonants is ignored (*znat'* - *bogat*), as is that between the hard and soft signs, and *i* and *ĭ* passim. One wonders what forms *golubu* and *sadi* in st. 3 (where *dlya* seems to have been confused with Gk *dia*) are supposed to be. *fechati* for *pechati* is due

to over-“correction” of the Georgian pronunciation of foreign *f* as *p*^ʼ. The *akanie* (*bagatu*, *zalatoi*, *vinavatu*) reflects the pronunciation of Moscow, but it is possible that some of the deviations from standard Russian are due to the neighbouring Ukraine, though the poems are not in Urkainian.

This Russian ode cannot count as anything but a failure. It is of interest, however, in encapsulating many of the poet’s basic themes.

Ioane, at the end of his note on fol. 54r, the gist of which has been given above, names the following poem on that page as a *mustazat*^ʼ, i.e. APT *mustazâd* ‘increased, augmented; a kind of poem’ (Steingass), presumably because it bears an introductory couplet. Ioane’s thanks to God for having found the poem cannot be with respect to the Russian orthography and grammar, which are as faulty here as in the preceding poem. No exhaustive attempt will be made here to correct the Russian. Those who know this language will easily do it for themselves, and the emendations to the previous text will be sufficient to indicate to those who do not the inadequacies of Sayat’-Nova’s Russian. The text, as far as I can decipher it, is as follows:

Соловей поит доложит вамъ имею нужду
Зладеи нарваль [надорвали] мои роза [мою розу], потому тужу.
Прекрасна фигурь мене позабул
Ни совшили [не сообщили?] я итак небиль етак
Вести отъ пово слишили [? посыльных] огрочишь
Миее посье тужишь я ни забуду.
Лубыми потреть дожусь петлеть
Поедим грузи и ежели нипридош издоводу урану слози.
Што тебе изтъ вери мене ни сумлевай [не сомневай].
Весма беречу ни паподоть уердинъ [верным ?] буду
Я искал тебе на летним сади заболилъ пости.
У мене балъ еиздь [? боьезнь] всеки наци пр(и)зиваль гости.
Ива [? ито] тжоли бога ради дели милости.
Одолжишь мене тои времо [время] весмо [весьма] рад буду.
Поченити мене чова [чего] стою ни пр[и]кажи вонъ.
Судба позволилъ на мои части етак фасонъ.
Раба булъ ваши отецъ, мой весь багратионъ.
Делити бога ради покроветелсту.

‘The Nightingale sings (and) reports to you, (saying), ‘I am in need.
Malefactors have torn at my Rose. For that I mourn.

‘(Her) beautiful countenance has forgotten me.
They did not inform me and so I was thus not (informed?)
You grieve over news from the envoys [?].
Afterwards you will yearn for me, (and) I shall not forget.

(Her) beloved portrait I must weave (for myself).
 Let us go to Georgia. If you do not come, therefore shall I shed tears.
 Because you have faith, have no doubts about me.
 I shall keep (my faith), it shall not be lost. I shall be (ever) faithful.
 I sought you in the summer garden. I fell ill from fasting.
 I have a sickness, (though) every nation invites me to be its guest.
 (My) joke is heavy. For love of God they had mercy (upon me).
 Prolong the burden you have placed upon me. I shall be glad.
 Appraise what I am worth. Do not order me away.
 Fate has permitted my lot to be of this mould.
 Your father was a slave, mine were all Bagratians.
 For love of God accord me your protection.'

In form, this ode is inferior to that already discussed, metre and rhyme being extremely haphazard. It can do nothing positive for Sayat'-Nova's reputation, and one is forced again to wonder what Ioane in his Georgian note was thanking God for. The subject matter is trite, except for one item, namely the boast, typical of the pride that the poet shows elsewhere in his dealings with kings and princes, that the presumed Russian recipient of his ode was the daughter of slaves, whereas he himself could claim kinship with the illustrious Armenian and Georgian royal house of Bagratuni. The reference to weaving could be significant.

The Russian ode on fol. 54A is a typical Sayat'-Nova complaint to the beloved for having allowed herself to be influenced against him by *zlodei* 'malefactors', the equivalents of the *dushman* and *yad* of his Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri poems. The term *mustazat* 'augmented' would presumably be at least as apt for this poem as for the proceeding one so designated by Ioane, in that the first and last quatrains are augmented by an identical couplet, introductory and final respectively.

По мне ни зволишь мои стари другу
 Видно заладеи тебе мешаютъ
 Мои красавицы похощъ на иагутъ
 Ни темъ ни милуишь многи умрудъ
 Дорого вешчи из Перси везуту
 Великимъ доволстимъ тебе дарутъ.
 Готово карету шести кони
 Ви палетикахъ на фармазони
 Училиось хитростьъ отъ Саломони
 Dla тово народъ тебе хвалутъ.
 Да поимъ похвалбу твои лица
 Лубими мне мили девица

Кто с тобою будедь шофчика [? шовчица]
 Висутит [? выступит] кровь спортица жолудь.
 Вобрази себе ни будишь мои
 Милирь [? миллионъ] готовъ писать патреть твои
 Мене нилза ходидь с тобою
 Какъ спора други тебе служатъ.
 Соловеи поют ваши лугу
 Развели [? развеялись] цветки на мести в игу
 Помнили [напомнили] мене ви рання нужду
 Кто увидидь поди в[е]дъ тужутъ
 По мне ни зволишь мои стари другъ
 Видно зладеи тебе мешають.

You are displeased with me, my old friend.
 It is clear, that malefactors have interfered with you.
 My Beauties are like rubies.
 Many emeralds will not get you their mercy.
 If things are dearly brought (to them) from Persia,
 Then they will grant you great satisfaction.
 Your carriage stands ready, with six horses,
 In flights all standing in formation.
 You learned your cunning from Solomon (himself),
 For which (your whole) nation lauds you.
 Let us sing your countenance's praise.
 Beloved of me is (that) sweet maiden.
 Whoever tries to "sew you up" (?),
 May his blood dry up, his stomach go sour.
 Imagine that you will be no (longer) mine.
 Millions stand ready to paint your picture.
 I am forbidden to walk with you.
 As (fomenters of) dispute others will serve you.
 Nightingales sing in your meadows.
 Flowers have blossomed in the south.
 They have reminded me of former distress.
 Whoever witnesses it, all will grieve (for me).
 You are displeased with me, my old friend.
 It is clear, that malefactors have interfered with you.

The above poem is not without interest for the themes and style of Sayat'-Nova. The poet clearly thought he should try to speak in his own way to the Russians, and this spirit of poetic adventure deserves more support than Ioane was able to give it (if, indeed, his own poor Russian did not add to the poem's linguistic defects).

The poem clearly falls short of the high metrical standards seen in Sayat'-Nova's best work. The verses are, for example, syllabically

uneven. This is, however, less important in a stressed language such as Russian, or English, and even less so in the case of a song, where the number of syllables to the bar is virtually irrelevant. And Sayat'-Nova must be credited with the insight to have realised this. He relies, therefore, wholly upon the rhyme scheme. Here, however, his knowledge of Russian in several instances, which cannot be attributed to Ioane, have played him false. He wishes his main rhyme to be in *-yut*, following on from *meshayut. vezut* fits. It is of minor importance in an Oriental poem that *yakut* would not normally signify a jewel to a Russian, but a dweller in Siberia (Yakut); and *(iz)umrud*, with its final regularly devoiced, will pass. The third person plural present indicative of *darit'*, *khvalit'*, *sluzhit'*, *tuzhit'* are, however, *daryát*, *khvalyát*, *slúzhāt*, *túzhāt*. Other stress defects are seen in the would-be rhymes *litsá/devítsa*, *lugú/yúgu*. There is a declensional fault in the intended genitive *shesti koni* (for *shesti koneĩ* which does not rhyme), and a lexical error in *zholud'*, which the poet must have intended to mean 'stomach' (*zhelúdok*), but which means instead 'acorn' (*zhělud'*) with a hardly apt anatomical meaning. The imagined addressee of the poem is clearly the beloved, as in many of Sayat'-Nova's songs the victim of backbiters, appearing here in Russian as *zlodei* 'malefactors'. So in v. 15 she should be referred to as *moya (mea)*, not *moĩ (meus)* — though Russian grammar would rather prefer the instrumental *moeĩ*. Armenian, Georgian, Azeri, and Persian, Sayat'-Nova's native or otherwise usual languages, have no grammatical gender, not even in the personal pronouns, and it may be that the poet made a mistake in the Russian. Or it may be that he was following the Oriental convention that the beloved is addressed in the masculine, i.e. with masculine pronouns in Persian, etc., and with exclusively masculine grammatical forms in Arabic, which has grammatical gender.

The Russian poem on fol. 55r of Ioane's manuscript is a typical *plainte*. It is imperfect in form, but the references to his misfortunes, his recourse to what he calls cunning to survive, the difficulties of the 'helpless fellow' (if that is how one is to interpret the text), and his urge to teach the foolish by plain speaking, for which he has suffered rejection, are relevant to the study of the poet's life and works.

Конечна бес тебе терпѣть ни могу.
Из досаду хворою ни могу.
Пожилити по мне до адна часу
При в(а)сь покорной слуга буду

Чем [ʔ тем] багать чем радъ я васъ угошу
От ваши милости доволин буду.

Беда мои [моя] видул [въдула] тебе горечи
Извинити мне токомъ случя
Хот[е]ль я уамжить [ʔ вѣмжить] вам одно речи
Боиюсь прот(и)вно будедъ ни с[о] мн[о]ю.

Внучилось хитрость такой начали
Охианъ [ʔ охание] грус[т]но взавса [ʔ вызвалась] мене фечали
Такоми [такими] суд[ь]бами додапучали
Ии ва[м] ли я скачу ни вам ли сплашу [спляшу].

Дурагу законить открыти скажу
Виклучили [выкѣючили] мене потому стужу
Раниль [ранилось] сердца мои ведь [с] ума хожу
При нуж[д]енъ нада идти дохтору.

Конешна бес тебе терпить ни могу.
Из досаду хворою ни можу.

Of course, I cannot hold out without you.
From worry and with sickness I have no strength.

Stay with me until one o'clock.
With you I shall be an obedient servant.
The more richly (it may be), the gladder I shall be to entertain you.
With your favour I shall be content.

My misfortune blew bitterness into you(r soul).
Forgive me, (who am) serving on the threshing floor.
I wanted (with my eyes) to convey one word.
I fear that (things will go) against me, not with me.

It was cunning that learned (taught me) such a principle.
Melancholy groaning evoked sorrow in me.
With such blows-of-fate they frightened a helpless fellow¹⁶
Shall I not gallop for you, shall I not dance for you?

To teach the fool I shall speak out openly.
They have shut me out because I pour cold water on things.
My heart is wounded, I am going mad.
I am forced to go to the doctor.

Of course, I cannot hold out without you.
From worry and wish sickness I have no strength.

¹⁶ Reading *dodapuchali* as *dado(na) puzhali/pugali*; *dadon* '(in foktales) the name of a prince, an awkward fellow (unbeholfener Mensch)', Pawlowski; possibly the equivalent of the 'raw milk drinker' (*hum kat'nakir ar'ami zat'*) of the Armenian ode *Ashkharēs me panjara ē*.

Such are Sayat'-Nova's Russian verses. One must confess to a feeling of relief in coming to the end of a chapter which shows little of the genius abundantly displayed in his Armenian, Georgian and Azeri poems.

EPILOGUE

There is a wellknown song by the late 19th-early 20th century Armenian minstrel Jivani, with the refrain ‘The days come and the days go by’.¹ One can say the same of the *ashughs* themselves. The Turkish television network TRT - Avrasya can, in its programmes *Bir soloist / İki soloist* (One soloist, Two soloists) assemble a male or female singer of Turkish romantic songs (*türkü*), ancient and modern, for every day of the year, accompanied by orchestras playing, among others, instruments on which Sayat’-Nova was proficient. The songs are heartfelt and moving, skilfully sung and performed according to traditional modes, and should be heard by anyone interested in the music of Anatolia and the Caucasus. Above them, however, Sayat’-Nova stands head and shoulders. He came out of such a milieu, and could compose and perform traditional love-songs as well as anybody. By his intricate versification, however, he is already in a different league. Thematically, his songs of the Nightingale to the Rose were doubtless mainly artificial, what was expected of a wandering minstrel. What distinguishes Sayat’-Nova from his fellow *ashugh*’s is his obvious sincerity. Into the artificiality of the court comes one who suffers, who loves too well, who bleeds when he is pricked, complains when he is wronged, and brings it to the attention of king and courtiers in haunting words and music. His life is a tragedy. For some reason he falls foul of his royal sponsor, and is forced to take the cowl when at the height of his poetic power. Nearly forty years of monastic silence follow, until he is finally struck down as a Christian martyr by invading Persian Muslims, who, among many others, have long threatened the Georgian throne. During the reign of his protector, Irakli II, who as a member of the Bagrationi dynasty must have been aware of his Armenian origins, the courts of Tiflis and T’elavi were oases of culture and civilisation. Georgian orthodox, Armenian monophysite, and Azeri Muslim lived peacefully side by side, and the songs of Sayat’-Nova, sung in the languages of all three, count as the finest flower of that civilisation doomed only a few years after the poet’s death to be blighted by the strong expansionist neighbour to the North. At the

¹ *Ôrer gu kan, ôrer g’ert’an.*

present time of writing, that empire has itself broken into pieces, and the peoples of the Caucasus are at each other's throat, Armenians against Azeris, Georgians against Abkhaz. If, as is devoutly to be wished for, unity is reestablished among these nations, Sayat'-Nova, who thought of himself as a builder of bridges, might well serve as patron saint.

ADDENDA

To p. 7 n. 20; p. 26 n. 91. The fullest account of the inscriptions at Sanahin, with their historical and architectural relationships, is K. Ghafadaryan's *Sanahni Vank'ë ev nra ardzanagrut'yunner*, Ac. Sc. Arm. SSR, Erevan, 1957. Only one inscription, an epitaph, relates to the 18th century (no. 159), with no relevance to Sayat'-Nova.

To p. 34 n. 118. For a first-hand account of the Cossacks of Mozdok and the surrounding tribes in the early 19th century, see the *Narrative of Don Juan van Halen's imprisonment in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Madrid and his escape in 1817 and 1818, to which are added his Journey to Russia, his campaign with the army of the Caucasus, and his return to Spain in 1821*, London, 1827, vol. II, chs. 10, 11. Further details of the *stanitsi* of the Mozdok Cossacks and the Russian campaigns are in Friedrich Bodenstedt's *Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre Freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen*, Frankfurt a/M, 1848, pp. 254-5; his account of events during Yermolov's *Verwüstungszug* against the Chechens to 1826, ch. 5, pp. 353-8 would not seem out of place in today's *Times*.

To p. 87 n. 26. One must be fair. Few in Frederick the Great's day knew much Greek, his English contemporary Dr. Johnson comparing it to lace: one got as much of it as one could. And as founder of the Académie des Nobles he expressed regret (in 1769) at the decline of Greek and Latin in the schools (On Education): two centuries later one could say *Plus ça change* (as when in 1780, the heyday of Haydn and Mozart, he complains of modern music — and in 1745 of enemies cracking the German military codes). The royal poet-philosopher considered himself, with some justification, the protégé of the Muses (Letter to Voltaire, 1742), and Lucretius, Cicero and Horace accompanied him on his campaigns (De Catt's Journal). Apart from his political, economic, and military achievements, his voluminous correspondence and the testimony of contemporaries reveal a learned, humane, and (sometimes at the expense of the English, particularly their Hanoverian monarchs) witty man. Irakli II had no reason to complain of the comparison.

To p. 116 n. 101. There is no reason to think that Sayat^c-Nova was dangerous. But in our own time one who pays obsessive unwanted attention to a member of the opposite sex, not infrequently accompanying this with amorous verses, is called by psychiatrists and police a “stalker”, “stalking” being a form of persecution that can occasion great anxiety and actual harm, and as such punishable by law. There is no specific medieval or early modern term for this behaviour, but general human behaviour shows a high degree of constancy. Penology has less, and early kings and princes and incensed relations (consider the case of Abélard) had counter-measures at their disposal to which modern victims have no recourse.

To p. 135 n. 10. The *lausengier* or *lauzengier* ‘backbiter’, calumniator’, a Romance loan from Germanic (Frankish **lausinga*, cf. Dutch *lofzanger* ‘singer of praises’) is an example of a complete reversal of meaning (cf. Hebrew *bârak* ‘bless; curse’, English *a blessed* (i.e. damned) *nuisance*), here by irony, illustrative of Empson’s seventh form of ambiguity whereby a word may mean itself and its exact opposite. On the *lausengier* in European literature, see E. Baumgartner, ‘Trouvères et losengiers’, *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, t. 25, Poitiers, 1982, pp. 171-178; M. Cocco, *Lauzengier: semantica e storia di un termine basilare nella lirica dei trovatori*, Cagliari, 1980. On ‘fork-tongued courtiers’, the bane of Sayat^c-Nova, see Ruth E. Harvey, ‘Allusions intertextuelles et les *lengua-forcat* de Bernard Marti (PC 63,2)’, *Contacts de langues, de civilisations, et intertextualité, IIIe Congrès International d’Etudes Occitanes*, Montpellier, 20-26 septembre 1990, pp. 927-942; Marti ranges himself with the worthy *soudadiers*, salaried servants of the court, as was Sayat^c-Nova, against the *lauzengiers au bec malahuros*, court gossips. The Arab equivalents of the *lausengier*, the *wâshî* and *nammâm* ‘tale-teller’, play a major rôle in Hispano-Arab literature, and form the subject of ch. 19 in the 11th-century Cordoba poet Ibn Ḥazm’s *Ṭawq* (Necklace), who distinguishes them from the ‘*âdhil* ‘fault-finder’ (ch. 16), who may have the best interests of the lovers at heart (like Sayat^c-Nova’s friends who have become, as he says, his enemies), and the *raqîb* ‘watcher’ (ch. 18), who may be only a well-meaning though tedious chaperone, on the one hand, and the *wâshî* ‘tale-teller’ on the other. The latter may be of three kinds: he who warns the beloved rightly that her lover is unworthy of her; he who wishes to possess her himself; and he who glories in lying gossip. The admittedly profligate

11th-12 century Ibn Quzmân hated the *ʿâdhil*, *raqîb*, and *nammâm* alike, as does Sayat^ʿ-Nova, whose 16th-century predecessor, the erotic poet K^ʿuch^ʿak Nahapet also complains only of *jôsh-k^ʿ* ‘calumnies’ (PT *jôsh* ‘boiling, rage, heat, lust’ (S), ‘boiling, commotion, attack’ (R), T *joshqun* ‘insolent’ (R), listed by Malkhaseantz^ʿ without derivation). On the Arabic sources, see A.R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic poetry and its relations with the Old Provençal troubadours*, Baltimore, 1946, repr. 1986, pp. xxiii-xxxiv, n. 42, pp. 78, 90-91, 276, reference from F.M. Maddison.

To p. 288 n. 144. The alphabetical (*abjad*) notation invented by the noble Moldavian tanburist at the Sublime Porte from 1688 to 1710, Prince Dimitri Cantemir, popular at court but rejected by traditional instrumentalists as too superficial, was defunct by Sayat^ʿ-Nova’s hey-day, and none of the terms Cantemir used for notes and modes are found in the latter’s work. A major step towards a modern and more acceptable notation was made in Istanbul by the tanburist (Cantemir himself thought the tanbur the ideal instrument to illustrate musical theory) Baba Hamparsun (Hambartz^ʿum, 1768-1839), whose system, devised in the first place to transcribe Armenian hymns such as those of Nersês Shnorhali, came to be generally adopted by Turkish musicologists. Many Turkish melodies, and several pieces by Cantemir, were so transcribed (see Ch. Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*, 1751, Bibl. Nat. de Paris, MS 1023; Teodor T. Burada, *Scrierile muzicale ale lui Dimitri Cantemir*, Analele Academiei Române: Bucarest, 1911, p. 24; E. Popescu-Judet. ‘Dimitri Cantemir et la musique turque’, *Studia et Acta Orientalia*, t. 7, Bucarest, 1968, p. 207; refs. from F.M. Maddison). It may be possible to find some songs mentioned in Sayat^ʿ-Nova’s annotations among these Turkish melodies, and the connections between West Turkish and Azeri texts and melodies need investigation.

To p. 291 n. 148. One cannot be absolutely sure that by [*t^ʿ*]anbure-n Sayat^ʿ-Nova meant the *t^ʿar*. The *tanbour* is described as a large instrument with eight strings by the Abbé Giambatista Toderini, *De la littérature des Turcs*, t. 1, Paris, 1787, p. 231, the size of which, as stated above, would seem to disqualify it as a suitable instrument to be used by a singer himself to accompany his performance. But Evliya Chelebi describes a smaller instrument called the *tel tanboursa* with three strings, and draws a distinction between the *tanburji* ‘player of the *tanbur*’ and the *tel tanburji* ‘player on the *tel tanbur*, presumably the *tanbura*

(*Seyâhatnâme*, t. 1, p. 621 and 634 respectively, *cit.* Popescu-Judet, *art. cit.*, p. 201 n. 5). T *tel* ‘string’ points to P *târ* ‘string’, and the Armenian *t’ar*.

To p. 325 n. 67. The usual Armenian for ‘seventy’ is *ewt’anasun* (Modern Western *eôt’anasun*). Apart from SN’s borrowed circumlocution here, only Georgian and English have this primitive reckoning based on fingers and toes; AV *three score and ten* represents Hebrew’s simple *shib’în*, e.g. at *Psalms* 90,10 (Luther *siebzig*).

To p. 375 n. 46. It was left to a Turkish governor of Erevan, Qoja Râghib, most felicitously to symbolise the relationship between the Nightingale and the Rose: *Hayal et nasbet-i rengini hüsün u askı dikkatlı / Sada-i atesini bülbüle gül gibi guş olmaz* ‘Consider the colourful relationship between Beauty and Love: / For the ardent voice of the Nightingale there is no ear like that of the Rose’ (Gibb, vi.269); less literally, ‘Between Beauty and Love there is a bond / Well recognised by a Turkish seer: / To hear the Nightingale’s ardent song, / What finer than the Rose’s ear?’

To p. 376 n. 54. Another game is referred to by SN in *Shent’an mitom vlaparaqob*, st. 4: *T’u mart’la khar ch’emi toli, / vit’amashot’ goli-goli, / gavshalot’ vardis p’ot’oli. / p’erp’erad susani vnakhe* ‘If it is true you are my partner, let us play *goli-goli*, let us separate the petals of the rose. I have beheld the lily full of colour.’ Ch’ik’obava’s derivation of *goli* from English *goul* is inapplicable here, though P *gola* ‘ball’ may fit. But *goli* is more likely P *gul* pron. *gol* ‘rose’, the *vard* of the next verse, and *goli-goli* P *gol-gûlî* ‘walk in a garden in spring’ (S) (*saison des roses*). Separating the petals of the rose may mean simply savouring its scent, or a childish divination technique such as ‘He loves me, he loves me not’, but an erotic image cannot be entirely excluded.

To p. 377 n. 57. Bodenstedt otherwise shared the ignorance of Sir Paul Rycaut, who knew of no imaginative poetry among the Armenians. Despite his long stay in Tiflis, Bodenstedt learned nothing of Sayat’-Nova, crediting the Armenians, though rich in historical, philological and theological writing, with “not a single poetical work of importance”, and holding that “only in Armenia did the amorous, intoxicating strains of the Persian muse remain without an echo” (*Die Völker des Kaukasus*..., pp. 156-7).

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